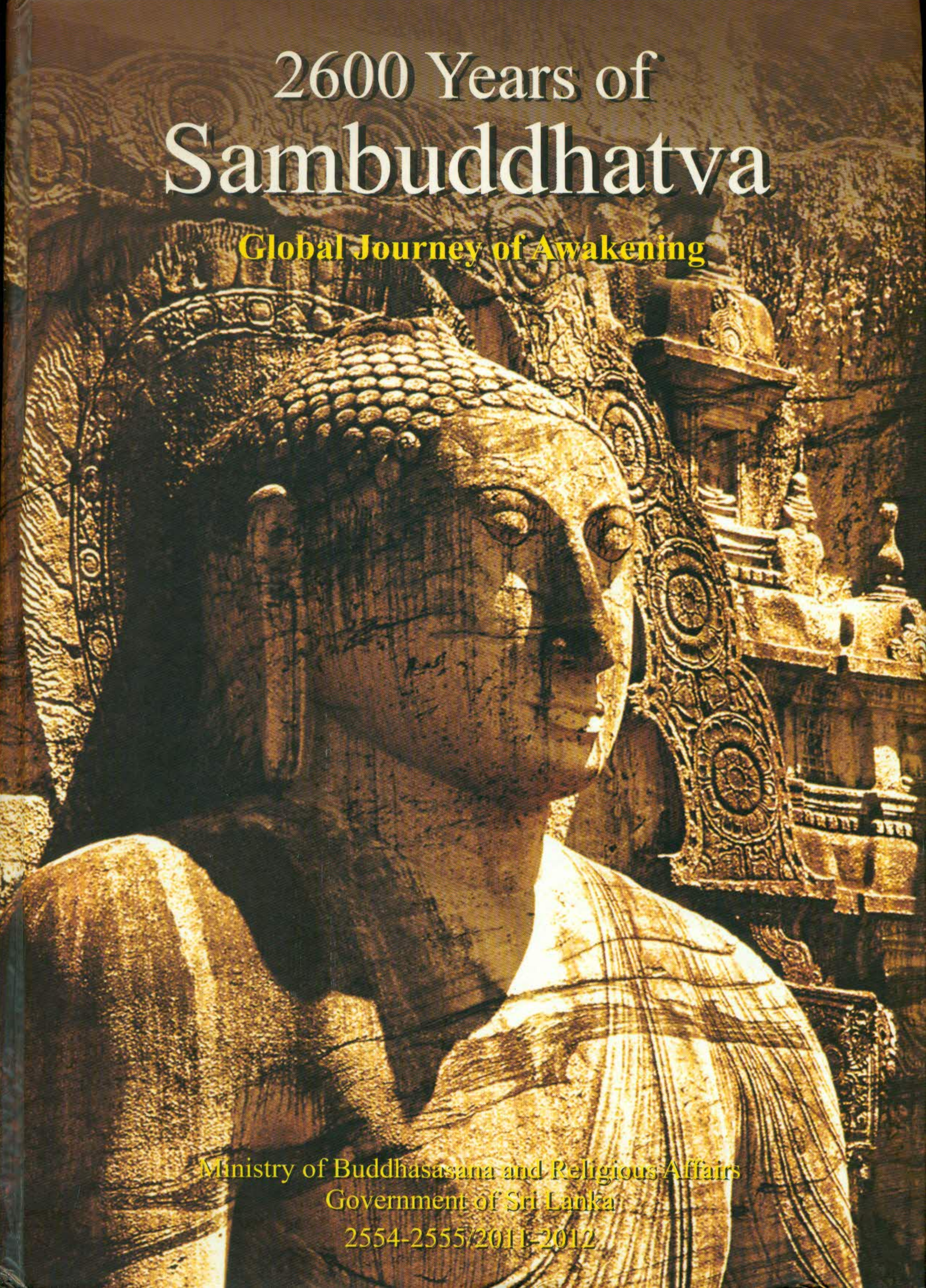
2600 Years of Sambuddhatva

Global Journey of Awakening



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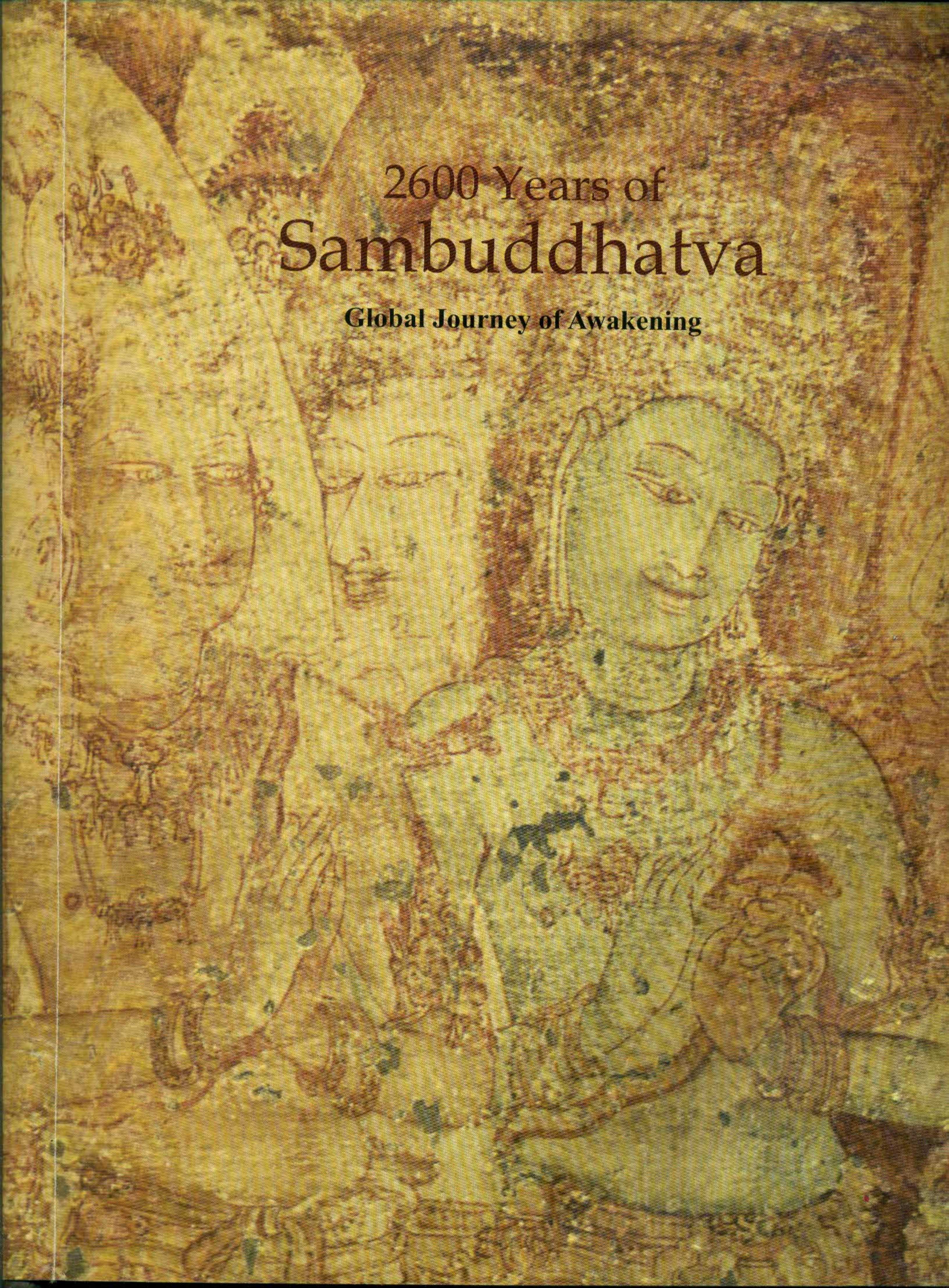

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Editors
Oliver Abenayake
Asanga Tilakaratne

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We sincerely thank all these good people across the globe who went out of their way to be nice, compassionate and helpful, and wish them good health, longevity and happiness, in addition to much merit, of course.

Oliver Abenayake
Asanga Tilakaratne
(editors)

Foreword

The 2600th anniversary of the sambuddhatva being a memorable occasion of the history of Buddhism it was decided that an anthology of essays covering the journey of Buddhism for the last 26 centuries, its current state and the future prospects should be brought out. Although the calculation of 2600 years of sambuddhatva is essentially the Theravada tradition, we thought that all three major traditions of Buddhism should be covered according to their geographical spread. Each essay is to cover in brief the pre-Buddhist religion, the arrival of Buddhism, the key milestones of history, personalities, literary and historical works, the current state of Buddhism and its future prospects and challenges.

The authors were asked to write their essays roughly within this framework which was meant to be only a guide. We tried to get the best possible authors for specific countries/regions, and with a deep sense of gratitude to them we say that in this anthology authors you read are among the best who have done research and published in their chosen countries/regions. The length of the essays was left largely to the discretion of the authors. The information given and the ideas expressed in the essays are the sole responsibility of the authors.

The essay on India was allowed larger space for its significance as not only the birth-place of Buddhism but also as the country where all three major Buddhist traditions, Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana, originated.

The editorial policy was to do minimum by way of editing. Individual authors were allowed to write in their own brand of English. Copy editing was done mainly for the sake of clarity and consistency, and we tried to minimize as much as possible meddling with individual author's style. Where the authors have used diacritical marks we have endeavoured to preserve them. But, again, our policy was to use as less of those marks as possible: if readers know Pali they do not need those; if they do not know Pali those marks would not make sense anyway. All Pali words, excepting such well-known terms as karma, dharma, sangha, samsara, nirvana, and other foreign terms save proper names are italicized.

Copyrights of the pictures have been acknowledged wherever possible. The majority of the pictures, however, are from public sources which do not require special permission. Nevertheless we thank all those owners of the pictures, known and unknown, with a deep sense of gratitude.

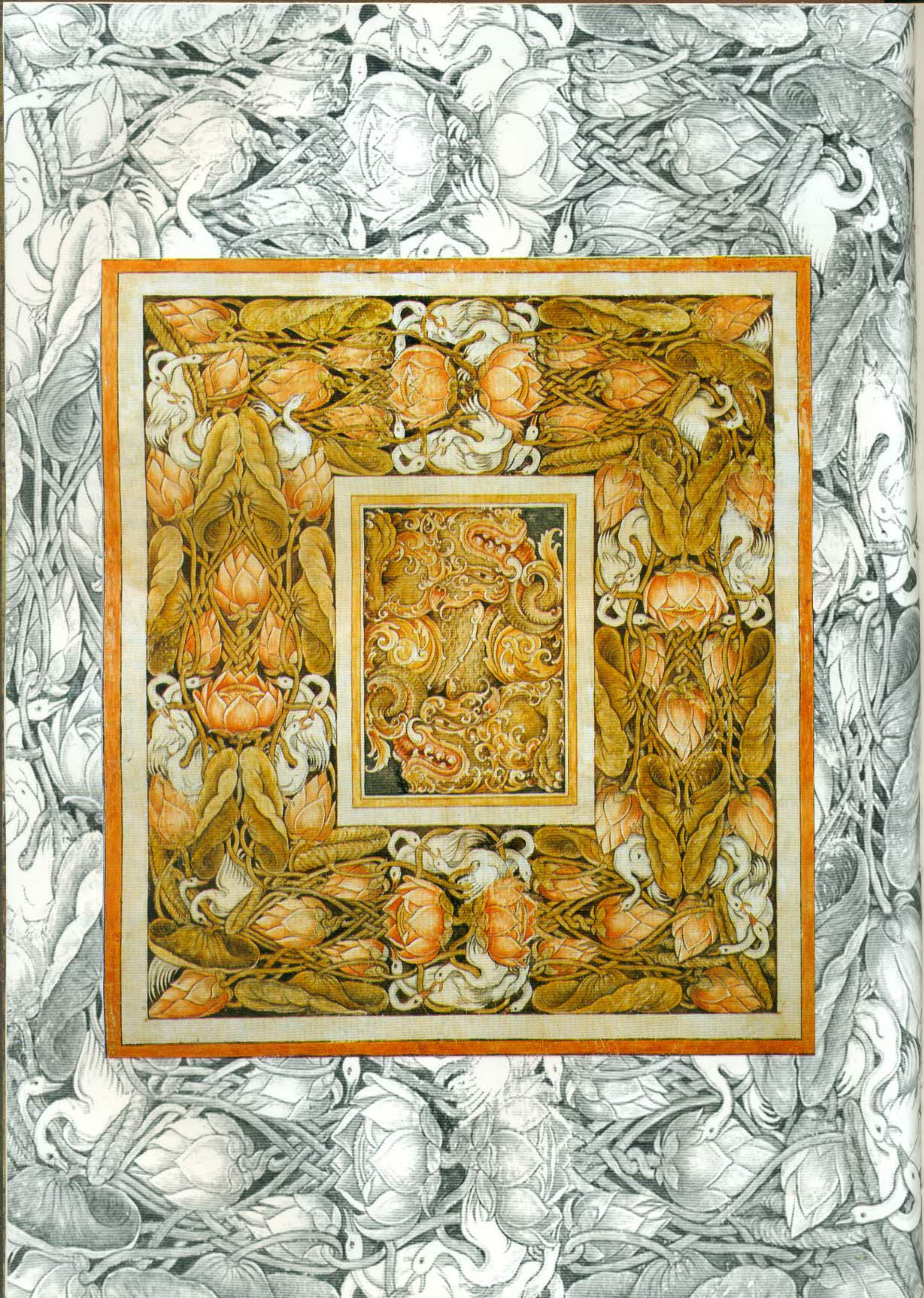
We are sure that there must be many incomplete-nesses and lapses in this work which was done within a short period of 18 months. We ask readers to bear with us. We will bear responsibility for any such lapses.

Oliver Abenayake and Asanga Tilakaratne (editors)

NAMO TASSA BHAGAVATO ARAHATO
SAMMA SAMBUDDHASSA

'Idam dukkham
ariyasaccanti me
bhikkhave pubbe
ananussutesu dhammesu
cakkhum udapādi
ñānam udapādi
paññā udapādi
vijjā udapādi
āloko udapādi'

DHAMMACAKKAPAVATTANA SUTTA



ESSAY 1

The Emergence of Buddhism and the 2,600th Anniversary of the Buddha's Enlightenment

Oliver Abenayaka

Introduction

This volume aims to explain, analyze and assess how Buddhism has become a world religion covering all five continents of the Earth during the last twenty-six centuries from the passing away of its founder, the Buddha. Introduction and expansion of Buddhism in relation to each of the countries, perhaps the sub-continents and continents, which have been selected as the scope of this Volume, are comprehensively and meticulously dealt with by a group of renowned scholars of Buddhist Studies of our time. Each essay seems to have uttered the final word on the selected area of the globe. In this introductory essay, I will touch upon three basic themes on which the present exercise is justified, galvanized and elaborated in its proper context. They are: the Emergence of Buddhism, the *Enlightenment* of the Buddha, and the 2,600th Anniversary of this event.

The Emergence of Buddhism

The historicity of the Buddha is established without an iota of doubt. There are hundreds of articles, monographs and books written and published all over the world to this effect after the pioneering effort of Oldenburg's *Buddha* in 1882.[1] The literary evidence in Pali, Sanskrit, Prakrit, Chinese and Tibetan substantiates it further. The archaeological remains and inscriptional evidence stand testimony to the historical existence of the Buddha's personality. The Pali Canon, page by page, informs us of the activities He had engaged in and carried out during the forty-five year career. As far as the Pali Canon is concerned, He was an active human being living among the contemporaries in the Gangetic valley of India. This is the evidence that the *Theravada* pointed out when the *Lokottaravada* denied the historical existence of the Buddha. The monasteries, parks, forests, villages, cities and kingdoms where the Buddha lived are reminded of as testimony to the Buddha's historical presence as reported in the *Kathavatthu*[2]. Similarly, Birth in Lumbini, the Enlightenment at Gaya, First Sermon in Benares, declaration of Passing Away after three months at Capala Monastery and Passing Away at Kusinara are spoken of as factors proving the Buddha's actual existence.[3] Further, the statements that the Buddha made to the effect that He lived at such and such a place, at such and such a time is taken as proof to confirm the empirical nature of His sojourn in India.[4] What is important here is that, at the time of the compilation of *Kathavatthu* in the 3rd century B.C., there was a living memory of the Buddha among the people of India. That is what was perpetuated up to now in the Theravada tradition.

In this discussion of the Emergence of Buddhism, I would like to emphasize the phrase *dittheva dhamme*, in this very life, which is quite often mentioned in the Pali Canon in relation to the Buddha's achievement[5]. Accordingly, the Buddha's Enlightenment is considered, at least during the period of early discourses, as a great achievement of this present life itself. The discourses are not in favor of assigning an uncountable long period of past to this achievement, as the later texts of Buddhology affirm. As an extremely intelligent, versatile and well educated person, Prince Siddhartha experimented on the basis of trial and error to understand the reality of man and universe. At the end, He succeeded after so many years of strenuous effort by becoming a *Sammasambuddha*, A Fully Awakened One. The historical background, as will be examined below, under which Buddhism arose paved the way for Prince Siddhartha to achieve the position of the Enlightened One 'in this very life'.

In the political arena, a great change occurred in North India during the seventh and sixth centuries BCE with the establishment of the new nation states under great kings. Rhys Davids, in the very first chapter of his *Buddhist India*, has, in the light of the Pali sources, collected and summarized the information about the kings who ruled over North India during the time of the Buddha.[6] He has pointed out that the four kingdoms had come to prominence among other states. They were Avanti, Vatsa, Kosala and Magadha. In fact, the kings of Kosala and Magadha had become the heirs of the political power during the time of the Buddha. This development culminated soon after the Buddha's demise with the result that Magadha overpowered the entire North India. The political authority enjoyed by the kings in India in the sixth century BCE is well manifested in the Canonical definitions assigned to the term *raja*. The kings were considered as those who delight or charm others by righteousness.[7] One of the attributes of a king was his lordship.[8] This was based upon the power of the king's command.[9] The king is said to have symbolized the state.[10] The first and the foremost head of the people is the king.[11] The king owns the state,[12] while he is the only person who is empowered to punish the wrongdoers.[13] The Pali Canon is the earliest literary source for this exalted position of the king. The consolidated rule of the monarchs of this calibre contributed immensely to the emergence of a society which India did not experience before.

The monarchical rule so blossomed and established by the time of the sixth century BCE in India paved the way for the disappearance of the tribal Republics. The Pali Canon witnesses only the remnants of the Republican system. With the rise of Magadha as a super power, the Republics disappeared in history forever. The monarchical system became the trusted and tested way of administration for all ills of the society. It was so well organized that no religious leader including the Buddha challenged its validity and introduced a new system of administration in its stead. All attempts were to reform but not to replace the monarchical system.

Before and since the advent of Aryans in India, the Indian society became a playground for hostilities among the rival groups to capture political power. They were rampant among the tribal heads, the republican leaders and the kings who ruled over hundreds of small kingdoms scattered all over North India. With the emergence of the new nation states under great kings before and during the time of the Buddha, these hostilities ceased to a significant extent and, as a result, political stability dawned for the first time in the Indian society. No words are necessary to explain what usually follows with political stability everywhere at all times. All these, slowly and gradually, materialized in India in the society of the sixth century BCE.

The emergence of the nation states may have been only one aspect of a larger movement of social change spearheaded by the Kshatriya clan since the beginning of the seventh century BCE The supremacy that Brahmins enjoyed earlier was challenged by the *Kshatriyas* as reported in the Pali Canon. *The Brahmins'* claim that they are of the best social grade while others are low, and only Brahmins are of fair complexion while others are dark, and only the Brahmins have the capability of liberating themselves, not others[14] was rejected and the supremacy of the Kshatriyas was reinforced. A new reading was suggested to the old social order. Accordingly, it was the Kshatriyas, not the Brahmins, who first came into existence in the process of social evolution. Therefore, they are supreme among the people. It was further suggested that the Kshatriyas inherited the right to rule over others due to the fact that they were the senior most social group.[15] The Kshatriyas were considered as the lords of the fields,[16] the protection of which was the sole objective of changing the administrative machinery with the king on top. It is also suggested that the Kshatriyas are the noblest among the bipeds.[17] A Kshatriya is not to be disregarded or despised thinking that he is youthful since as the lord of men he can bring disaster to his rivals.[18] As Rhys Davids observes, the head of the four social grades were the Kshatriyas who claimed descent from the leaders of the Aryan tribes in their invasion of the continent of India. They were most particular as to the purity of their descent through seven generations, both on the father's and the mother's side and are described as fair in color, fine in presence and stately to behold.[19]

Regarding the relationship between the Kshatriyas and Brahmins in the sixth century BCE in India, the following observation of Rhys Davids should also be taken into consideration. The kings are their (the Brahmins') patrons to whom they look up, from whom they hope to receive approval and rewards. And it was not till the time we are now discussing that they put forward claims, which we find still vigorously disputed by all Kshatriyas. We find, for instance, that the Jain books take it throughout as a matter of course, that the priests, as regards social standing, are below the nobles. This was the natural relation between the two as we find throughout the world.[20] Accordingly, the social and political force of the day were the Kshatriyas. On the one hand, they were the rulers and on the other, they were the defenders of religion and the benefactors of the national economy. Their presence and impact were felt everywhere.

The change that took place in the economic frontiers in the sixth century BCE in India is interesting to note. It had direct bearings in the spheres of culture and religion. With the state patronage, a new clan having wealth and power came to the scene. The generic name given to them in the Buddhist sources is *Setthi,* the wealthy merchant. These men of trade started their activities well before the time of the Buddha. By the sixth century BCE, they had established their dominance and authority to the extent that their support was solicited by all social grades. The old system of conveying goods in carts was continued, but the ships (*Nava*) were used for intercity and international trade.[21] It is generally believed that these traders introduced the system of writing and use of iron which they learnt, in their travels abroad, to the Indian society. It is legitimate to think that they were instrumental in introducing a monetary system so that people could buy what they wanted instead of exchanging goods that they had produced. The interesting stories about the *Kahapanas,* the gold coins, found in the Buddhist literature indicate the germinal stage of a market economy that was thriving for the first time.

The change from agriculture to commerce could not have been overlooked by the religious leaders who flourished in the sixth century BCE in India. This is well substantiated by the fact that even the Buddha, who claimed that he proclaims only the suffering and its cessation,[22] took his time to elaborate the good qualities of competent traders. According to the Buddha, a trader should posses the qualities of shrewdness, capability and inspiration of confidence. Shrewdness is defined as the skills in buying and selling, capability as the sense of net profit and inspiration of confidence as ready sources for capital.[23] The Buddha further points out the importance of vigilance and dedication needed for a trader to maintain a successful career of an entrepreneur.[24]

It is reported in *the Pali* Canon that the Buddha frequently visited *Savatthḥi* the capital city of Kosala and *Rajagaha,* the capital city of Magadha. These were the places where the traders had flourished with their business concerns. They lived in luxury mansions put up in the areas allocated for them in the cities. The *Setthis* of Rajagaha and Baranasi find mention in the texts.[25] In the Canonical information, as popularly known, Anathapindika is pre-eminent among the traders. The female counterpart of Anathapindika was Visaka, the most popular woman in the entire Theravada tradition. The contribution that these traders made in fostering and popularizing Buddhism still reverberates in the hearts of the devout Buddhists. How effective they were in cultural and religious affairs is best exemplified in the story of Yasa. Yasa was the son of a great merchant. He had three mansions, one for the cold weather, one for the hot weather and one for the rains. Being ministered to by bands of female musicians for four months in the mansion for the rain he did not come down from that mansion. Then while Yasa was possessed of and provided with the five kinds of sense pleasures, and was being ministered to, he fell asleep first and his suite fell asleep later. That was the routine. One day Yasa got up early to see his own suite sleeping, one with a lute in the hollow of her arm, one with a tabor at her neck, one with a drum in the hollow of her arm, one with disheveled hair, one with saliva dripping from her mouth, muttering in their sleep like a cemetery before his eyes. Seeing this change in their appearance, a sudden dismay arose in Yasa. He decided to renounce the household life and started his journey to look for solace. Finally, Yasa met the Buddha and became one of his early disciples. When his friends, fifty four in number heard the ordination of Yasa they exclaimed: Now this can be no ordinary doctrine and discipline, nor can this be an ordinary going forth, in that Yasa the young man of family, having cut of his hair and beard, having put on the yellow robes, has gone forth from home into homelessness. Having thought so, they also became the members of the community of monks.[26] It is legitimate to think others also followed suit. Such was the impact that the traders had on the society in the sixth century BC in India.

The combination of the Kshatriya rulers and the altruistic new rich class gave rise to a cultural renaissance in the sixth century BCE in India. They were not committed to a particular religion. They encouraged all religious systems and supported them equally by providing them with all requisites. The rulers had made arrangements for the religious representatives to reside together at the conference halls taking part in discussions and debates. The information preserved in the Pali Canon points to the fact that there was a conference hall of this nature in all principal cities throughout North India. The *Sekha sutta* of the Majjhimanikaya informs us that a new conference hall had been built in Kapilavatthu when the Buddha was staying in Nigrodha's monastery among his relatives. It is said that the conference hall had not yet been occupied by anyone before it was inaugurated by the Buddha on the invitation of his relatives. The indication of the sutta is that there was a residence in this conference hall, provided by the community, for recluses of all religious denominations.[27] The rulers respected all religious leaders alike as almost all of them in the nation states paid their homage to the Buddha. This tolerant attitude towards religion is well endorsed in Buddhism in the concepts of the Wheel Rolling Monarch and the seven conditions of welfare and progress, two basic teachings which deal with the Buddhist political philosophy.

The freedom of thought and expression that prevailed without any obstruction whatsoever marked the uniqueness of the Indian society in the sixth century . The absolute credit for maintaining democracy to such an exalted position should go to the rulers of the day. There was no political interference in the quest for truth. An open society filled with the determination to understand the true nature of man and his environment never existed before or after the sixth century BCEanywhere at anytime in the world. There were developed, perhaps even more developed, societies outside the Indian subcontinent. However, the circumstances were not ripened in those societies to produce an Enlightened One since the freedom of thought and expression was not so sacred in those societies as in the society of India in the sixth century BCE.

The migration of the Aryans from the Indus valley to the Gangetic valley opened up a new chapter in the history of India. As a result, the Aryan culture that grew up in the Indus valley and the indigenous culture that survived and developed in the Gangetic valley harmoniously mixed together giving rise to a new synthesized society. Not only the social order but also the social values prevailed in the Indus valley underwent a tremendous change in the Gangetic valley. As mentioned before, the Kshatriya clan climbed the top of the social ladder overpowering the Brahmins who were all powerful in the Indus valley. The authority of the Vedas was questioned. The rites and rituals based on sacrifice were condemned. A new trend of vegetarianism arose. The attire of men and women faced the climatic challenges. The cultivation of paddy replaced the cultivation of wheat and animal husbandry giving a sense of retribution of the physical, verbal and mental deeds. Women began to agitate for equality. The rigidity imposed on religion was loosened. As a result of these and many others, a new class of elite arose in and around the sixth century BCE in India. In the Pali Canon, they are designated as *vinnu purisa*, the wise men. A religion which could satisfy these wise men had become the necessity of the day. Buddhism filled this vacuum.

The religious background of Buddhism can be briefly outlined as follows; In the era during which Buddhism emerged in India, the intellectual thought had polarized into two as religion and materialism. The Vedic tradition with all its offshoots including the Upanishad philosophy as well as some of the major trends of the movement of Sramanas fall into the category of religion which separated the soul from the body.[28] In all these systems of religion, final emancipation was understood as liberating the soul from the body. This could have been achieved either through mortifying the body or through performing rites, rituals and ceremonies based on superstitious beliefs to satisfy the soul. Since materialism arose as an antithesis to religion, all materialist ideologies proclaimed that whatever is the soul, that is the body.[29] As both the soul and the body are identical, an extra effort is not necessary to liberate the soul because it gets liberated automatically at the breaking up of the body, the death. Therefore, the materialists emphasized the gratification of sense faculties to the utmost. Since the soul gets liberated at the death, they argued, that the morality has no value. Whether one is morally good or bad, one is destined to end the existence. The emphatic message of the materialists was the enjoyment of present life disregarding the ethical responsibility.

What is to be reiterated here is that the exponents of both religion and materialism, even though they were in mutual conflict, had accepted the theory of soul in two different ways. Religion's position was that the soul survives after death while materialism declared that the soul gets annihilated at the death. Therefore, both religion and materialism were bound together on the basis of the theory of soul. If the soul survives after death, a means to stop the continuous survival had to be sought for. The moral values crept into the religion on this basis. As mentioned before, since there is no survival after death, materialism was in a position to disregard morality. The intellectual option available for the individuals in the sixth century BCE in India, therefore, was either to accept the theory of permanent soul with the prescriptions of self mortification, rites, rituals, ceremonies and moral responsibility or to accept the theory of temporary soul with the prescription of sense pleasure without any moral responsibility.

It is quite natural for a critical response to emerge to this mutual conflict. The response so emerged was twofold. The first was skepticism which suspended judgments and adherence to any view. The second was Buddhism which came forward with a rational and empirical view of the world of sense experience. There is no doubt that skepticism would not have satisfied the intellectuals who were looking for a new and radical ideology which could cater for their religious needs and philosophical aspirations. Doubt and suspension would not have taken them anywhere. Therefore, a cry for a new movement which transcended all metaphysical views and a religion which provided verifiable answers to the perennial problems of man would have emerged and continued. Buddhism was the result.

The Enlightenment

The path that led to and cognitive contents of the Enlightenment in the case of the Buddha Gotama have been the subject matter for hundreds of articles, monographs and books written in the East and West since the beginning of the Buddhist Studies in its present sense. There is no unambiguous and straightforward description in the sources in this regard. The Pali Canon itself narrates the events preceding the Enlightenment and the achievements thereof in diverse ways. As observed by Bhikkhu Nanamoli, "The Enlightenment itself is described in a number of discourses and from several different angles, as though one were to describe a tree from above, from below and from various sides, or a journey by land, by water, by air".[30] With Canonical references, he further points out that the discourses describe the Enlightenment of the Buddha in terms of dependent arising; the three true knowledges; gratification, inadequacy and escape in the case of the five aggregates, the elements, sensual desires, feelings and the world; the four right endeavours; the foundation of mindfulness; the four bases of success and the abandonment of evil thoughts. This shows that the process towards and the cognitive contents of the Enlightenment cannot be explained in a rigid absolute frame acceptable to everyone for ever. Any attempt towards this end is bound to fail. However, the biographies of the Buddha are compiled disregarding this obvious fact.

As reported in the Ariyapariyesana, Mahasaccaka and Sangarava suttas of the Majjhimanikaya, Siddhartha moved to the township of Uruvela in Magadha after leaving Uddaka Ramaputta.[31] There he saw a delightful stretch of land and a lovely woodland grove and a clear flowing river with a delightful ford, and a village for support nearby. Siddhartha sat down in the woodland grove thinking "indeed this does well for striving". In the Mahasaccaka and Sangarava suttas, it is specifically mentioned that Siddhartha practised self-mortification in the woodland grove of Uruvela in Magadha.

In the Mahasaccaka and Sangarava suttas it is unequivocally stated that a psychological change flashed in Siddhartha who was physically exhausted in the process of extreme emaciation. It occurred to him that self-mortification is not the path to the Enlightenment. He could recollect the first trance (*pathamajjhana*) that he achieved during his babyhood in the shade of a rose-apple tree when his father was ploughing. Siddhartha then realised the path leading to the Enlightenment is nothing but the meditative process of which the first trance is the starting point.

In the Mahasaccaka and the Sangarava suttas, it is reported that Siddhartha followed the meditative process of four *dhyanas* thinking that it was the path leading to the Enlightenment.[32] The fourth *dhyana* took Siddhartha to the psychological position which has neither anguish nor joy and which is entirely purified by equanimity and mindfulness. Siddhartha directed his mind composed thus, quite purified, quite clarified, without blemish, without defilements, grown soft and workable, fixed, immovable to the knowledge of one's own past existence (*pubbenivasa)*, divine eye (*dibbacakkhu)* and exhaustion of influxes (*asavakkhaya)* in that order and attained the Enlightenment according to these two discourses. If that is so, Siddhartha became enlightened through the devotion to the cognitive understanding of existence. As described in brief in the Ghotamuka sutta of the Majjhimanikaya[33] and in detail in the Samannaphala sutta of the Dighanikaya[34], for instance, this is the path leading to the Arahantship too. This puts the Enlightenment on par with the Arahantship.

However, in the Ariyapariyesena sutta of the Majjhimanikaya, the realisation of the Enlightenment is described not as an achievement of this cognitive process of *Pubbenivasa*, *Dibbacakkhu* and *Asavakkhaya*. The order of events described in the Ariyapariyesana is as follows: renunciation, interaction with Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta, arrival at Uruvela, sitting down in the shady woodland grove with the determination for striving. Then it is said that Siddhartha, being liable to birth, decay, disease, death, sorrow and defilements, attained the Enlightenment having known the peril in them, winning the unborn, unageing, undecaying, undying, unsorrowing and purity of mind which is the utmost security from bonds – Nibbana.[35] It is to be noted that there is no direct mention to the *Nirodhasamapatti* (attainment of cessation) here. What it says is that the Enlightenment is nothing but the understanding of the perennial problems of human existence. Accordingly, the root cause that Siddhartha discovered of the problems of birth, decay, disease, death, sorrow and defilements is the attachment to, or identification of, self. As long as one is attached to the notion of self or identifies oneself with self, there is no escape from the eternal predicament of human existence. According to the Ariyapariyesana, this is not only the truth that Siddhartha realised but also the truth that the Buddha revealed to the five monks at the deer park in Benares. What is the path that Siddhartha followed to realise this truth? The answer that the Ariyapariyesana gives to this question can be described as follows:

The Buddha preached the Ariyapariyesana at the hermitage of Brahmin Rammaka in Savatthi, the capital city of Kosala. He addressed the monks assembled there with the intention of getting a chance of hearing a talk on Dhamma face to face with Buddha. Therefore, the vocative plural form "*bhikkhave*" is employed to indicate these monks to whom the Ariyan quest was preached right through in the discourse. As I have pointed out elsewhere,[36] the vocative plural form of "*bhikkhave*" is never used in the Ariyapariyesana sutta for the monks who listened to the Buddha at Benares. They are differently identified as *pancavaggiya bhikkhu.* The Buddha's talk on Dhamma addressed to the monks assembled at the hermitage of Rammaka dealt with his Enlightenment and its revelation at the deer park in Beneris. The sequence of events that the Buddha divulged to the monks assembled at the hermitage of Rammaka is as follows: awareness of perennial problems of human experience, renunciation, interaction with Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta, arrival at Uruvela, Enlightenment (the understanding of the true nature of human predicament) through striving, reluctance to preach the Dhamma, invitation of Brahma Sahampati, leaving for Benares, meeting Upaka, the naked ascetic, on the way, reaction of the group of five monks and winning over them, revelation of his Enlightenment in terms of the understanding of perennial human problems and concluding remarks.[37]

The concluding remarks of the Buddha here are so abrupt that one may come to the conclusion that they were also part and parcel of his address to the group of five monks at the dear park in Benares. However, a careful scrutiny would reveal that the concluding remarks were addressed to the monks assembled at the hermitage of Rammaka at a later date. Nevertheless, one cannot overrule the logical connection and the contextual propriety between the Buddha's revelation to the five monks in Benares and his concluding remarks addressed to the monks assembled at the hermitage of Rammaka. The importance of the concluding remarks to our discussion in this essay is the path that the Buddha recommended there. The interconnection between the Buddha's Enlightenment as revealed to the group of five monks and the concluding remarks addressed to the monks at the hermitage of Rammaka is so close and causally related that it is extremely difficult for anyone who reads the Ariyapariyesana to desist from the hypothesis that the Buddha became enlightened through the process of development of correct attitude towards sense pleasure, trances (*Jhana*) and attainments (*Samapatti*) and the cessation of perception and feeling (*Sannavedayitanirodha*), although this path is described there as the path to be followed by the monks. It is said that the defiling impulses are completely destroyed by the intuitive wisdom that arose as a result of entering on and abiding in the cessation of perception and feeling. As far as I can see this explanation is the only way through which one can justify the assumption that Siddhartha moved to experience the Nirodhasamapatti during the process of Enlightenment. However, there is no way to justify the assumption that Siddhartha emerged from the Nirodhasamapatti to devote his time to the cognitive process of Pubbenivasa, Dibbacakkhu and Asavakkhaya before his Enlightenment. Siddhartha experienced the Enlightenment either through the cessation of perception and feeling or through the extra sensory perception, not through the combination of both.

From what is discussed so far, it is obvious that two distinctive paths leading to the Enlightenment are recognised in the Canonical sources. One is the appeasement of mind of which the *Nirodhasamapatti* is the culmination. The other is the cognitive process of which the *Asavakkhayanana* is the culmination. The *Nirodhasamapatti* brings the defiling impulses to the complete destruction (*sabbasava parikkhina honti*).[38] Therefore, both paths end with the understanding of Four Noble Truths since the destruction of defiling impulses is described as the arising of the knowledge of suffering, its cause, its cessation and the path leading to its cessation.[39] In his first sermon, the Buddha declared that the insight, the knowledge, the understanding, the vision and the light arose in him regarding the Four Noble Truths which had not been heard before.[40] As I have pointed out earlier, the path leading to the cessation of suffering is considered the Buddha's outstanding discovery.[41] At the very outset, this is what the Buddha divulged to the group of five monks to whom the first sermon was addressed. According to the first sermon, the path leading to the cessation of suffering is the Middle Path which avoids extreme of sense-pleasure which is low, coarse, vulgar, ignoble and harmful and the extreme of self-mortification which is painful, ignoble and harmful. The Buddha discovered this Middle Path which gives vision, gives knowledge, and leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbana. "What is this Middle Path? It is this Noble Eightfold Path, that is to say: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration".[42] If this is the path leading to the Enlightenment, the question that would arise is its absence in the Canonical accounts which describe Siddhartha's struggle for Enlightenment. It is not referred to either in the cognitive process or in the process of the appeasement of mind. Does it mean that Siddhartha followed one path to the Enlightenment and the Buddha recommended another for his disciples? This is not so because the Buddha emphatically declared in a discourse of vital importance to our discussion that he practised the Middle Path to become enlightened in the following words. "Suppose a man wondering in a forest wilderness found an ancient path, an ancient trail, travelled by men of old, and he followed it up, and by doing so he discovered an ancient city, and ancient royal capital, where men of old had lived, with parks and groves and lakes, walled round and beautiful to see, so I too found the ancient path, the ancient trail travelled by the Fully Enlightened Ones of old. And what was that ancient path, that ancient trail? It was this Noble Eightfold Path, that is to say: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration".[43]

Therefore, the paths of the cognitive process and the appeasement of mind should have direct bearings to the Middle Path so prominently discussed in the sutta literature. The factors of the path that are enumerated in brief in the Ghotamuka sutta and in detail in the Samannaphala sutta [44] to be followed by the disciples can easily be identified with the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path. However, the factors of the path followed by Siddhartha, as enumerated in the Ariyapariyesana, Mahasaccaka and Sangarava suttas do not fit into the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path in an obvious manner as in the previous case. Nevertheless, the accounts of the path that Siddhartha followed to become the Buddha can be reconciled with the Noble Eightfold Path on the following arguments:

The Noble Eightfold Path comes into effect with the rejection of two extremes. Siddhartha is said to have experienced the extreme of sense-indulgence at his youth before the renunciation[45] and the extreme of self-mortification as an ascetic after the renunciation.[46] Therefore, realising the inadequacy of both as the paths leading to the Enlightenment, it was quite natural for Siddhartha to embark on the experiment of the Middle Path. The fundamental principle operated in his effort would have been the avoidance of extremes, dear and near to him for so long. However, the sources on Siddhartha's struggle for Enlightenment are silent on the details of this principle, which he elaborated later as the Buddha, except one salient factor. That is *padhana* in Pali. In the Ariyapariyesana, Mahasaccaka and Sangarava suttas, it is reported that Siddhartha sat down in the woodland grove in the village of Senani near Uruvela with the thought "This will serve for *padhana* of a clansmen who seeks the struggle".[47] The word *padhana* has the meanings: exertion, energetic effort, striving and concentration of mind.[48] "It is four fold, *viz sanvara*, *pahana*, *bhavana*, *anurakkhana* or exertion consisting in the restraint of one's senses, the abandonment of sinful thoughts, practice of meditation and guarding one's character."[49] The means through which Siddhartha became enlightened is nothing but *padhana*, a combination of factors, very specifically the concentration of mind, common to the Noble Eightfold Path too. This reminds us obviously of S*amma Samadhi*, the last factor of the Noble Eightfold Path.

The Noble Eightfold Path ends with right concentration. No more factors are to be added to the Path as explicitly expounded in hundreds of discourses in the Pali Canon. This Path of which right concentration marks the end is described as a course through which many of the Buddha's disciples attained the Arahantship, the accomplishment of and going beyond super knowledge.[50] It should be stated here that the Path similar to the Noble Eightfold Path in Buddhism is found in the Yoga philosophy.[51] Since, this Yogic Path too ends with concentration (*Samadhi*), one may be misled to think that the Buddha borrowed his Path from the Yogic tradition. There is no room for such an assumption, since the right concentration in the Buddhist Path is a means while the concentration in the Yogic Path is the goal. However, right concentration plays the most decisive and vital role in the Buddhist Path. I would like to identify it as the reconciling factor which binds the appeasement of mind, the cognitive process and the Middle Path together.

Samma Samadhi is defined in the discourses, for instance, in the Mahasatipatthana sutta of the Dighanikaya and in the Saccavibhanga sutta of the Majjhimanikaya[52], as the attainment of four *dhyanas*. The fourth *dhyana* is vital in the process of enlightenment since it makes the mind soft and workable so that it can be directed either to the attainments (*samapatti*) or to the super knowledges (*abhinna*), as one wishes. As recorded in the Sangarava sutta,[53] Siddhartha directed his mind to the super knowledges only after the accomplishment of four dhyanas. In other words, Siddhartha fulfilled *Samma Samadhi* as the means of directing his mind to the super knowledges. This shows that *Samma Samadhi* is an inbuilt factor in the cognitive process. In the process of the appeasement of mind too, *Samma Samadhi* is taken into account as an inevitable component since, the four attainments and the attainment of cessation (*Nirodhasamapatti*) are possible only after the fulfilment of four dhyanas as reported in the discourses, for instance, the Ariyapariyesana sutta.[54] As mentioned before, even though it is uncertain whether Siddhartha became enlightened through the process of the appeasement of mind, one could interpret the Ariyapariyesana sutta to this effect. Therefore, the report in the Ariyapariyesana sutta that Siddhartha succeeded in the attainment of nothingness (*akincannayatana*) under Alara Kalama and of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasannanasannayatana*) on the information provided by Uddaka Ramaputta is of vital significance to our discussion here. These two attainments with the preceding two of *ākāsānañcāyatana* (sphere of boundless space) and *vinnānañcayatana* (sphere of boundless coconsciousness) are possible only when one is successful in accomplishing the four *dhyanas*. In other words, none of the attainments can be achieved without the prerequisites identified in the gradual succession of trances and absorptions. Therefore, the report of Siddhartha's achievement under Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta indicates that he had experienced the four trances (and the first two attainments) before. This is how *Samma Samadhi* comes into the process of the appeasement of mind. Without *Samma Samadhi* neither the cognitive process nor the process of the appeasement of mind is achievable. Therefore, it is obvious that Siddhartha proceeded forward on the firm footing of right concentration on whatever path he selected for his goal.

It is to be noted here that the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path are causally related. In this regard the Mahacattarisaka sutta of the Majjhimanikaya brings three points into our notice. Firstly, right view, right effort and right mindfulness are jointly operative in all path factors. Secondly, right concentration is accompanied by the seven previous components of the path. Thirdly, each succeeding factor is dependent on the preceding factor.[55] Therefore the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path come into operation unitedly. One factor is not separated from another in the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path. Accordingly, the fulfilment of *Samma Samadhi* by Siddhartha indicates that he had put all the other factors of The Noble Eight Fold Path into practice before the Enlightenment. The conclusion that we can arrive at here is that the Path that the Buddha recommended for his disciples is not decisively different from the Path that he followed to become enlightened.

The next problem that I would like to address in this essay is whether the knowledge that the Buddha is said to have demonstrated during his career is adequately manifested in the Path that he followed as Siddhartha. The knowledge of the Buddha is described in diverse ways in the Pali Canon itself. Its expansion in later works has gone beyond the limits that the Pali Canon would have ever expected. A detailed description of the knowledge of the Buddha is unwarranted here, since Jayatilleke has dealt with this topic rather exhaustively in his monumental work, *The Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*.[56] Suffice it to say that the boundary of this expansion is the attribution of the all-knowing knowledge (*sabbannutanana*) to the Buddha in no uncertain terms. Since the Canonical accounts of the Path that Siddhartha followed do not go hand in hand with the Canonical information of the multifaceted knowledge of the Buddha, it was later decided to incorporate the all-knowing knowledge without having any Canonical base. An unambiguous statement to this effect is found in the Jatakanidana, the first complete biography of the Buddha in the Pali tradition.[57] A process of the Enlightenment is given in the Jatakanidana in the following order: Retro-cognitive knowledge in the first watch of the night, clairvoyance in the middle watch of the night, knowledge of the interdependent origination in the last watch of the night, all-knowing knowledge at dawn. The attribution of all-knowing knowledge thus to the process of the Enlightenment seems to have been thought to solve the problem of imbalance between the Path followed and the multifaceted wisdom declared later. It is noteworthy that the Jatakanidana has introduced a crucial adjustment to the process of Enlightenment by removing the knowledge of the destruction of defiling impulses (*asavakkhayanana*) and by introducing the knowledge of the interdependent origination (*paticcasamuppadanana*) in its place. The author of the Jatakanidana, most probably the Venerable Buddhaghosa, has removed from the process of Enlightenment the all important knowledge of the destruction of defiling impulses which is common to the cognitive path as well as to the path of the appeasement of mind. His replacement is nothing but the knowledge of the interdependent origination. This leads us to rethink of the mechanism through which Siddhartha became enlightened.

In the Canonical accounts too, the knowledge of the interdependent origination is brought closer to the Enlightenment. As the Mahavagga informs us the Buddha paid attention to the causal uprising in direct and reverse order during the first week after his Enlightenment.[58] In this regard, there is a discourse of vital significance in the Samyuttanikaya.[59] The problem that Siddhartha has given thought to before the Enlightenment is: "This world has fallen into a slough; for it is born, ages and dies, it passes away and reappears, and yet it knows no escape from this suffering. When will an escape from this suffering be described". This forced Siddhartha to find out the necessary conditions for ageing and death. With ordered attention he understood "birth is there when ageing and death come to be; birth is a necessary condition for them". In this way, he went through the formula of the inter-dependant origination one by one up to the point of consciousness taking both origin and cessation into consideration. The conclusion that Siddhartha arrived at, at the end of the two fold process is recorded in the discourse as follows: "This is the path to Enlightenment that I have now reached". Therefore Siddhartha became the Buddha on the understanding of the interdependent origination. This is the ancient trail which is identified with The Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddha declared that he directly knew the origin and cessation of the factors enumerated in the formula of interdependent origination up to consciousness by following The Noble Eightfold Path. Accordingly, The Noble Eightfold Path is the means while the end result is the knowledge of the interdependent origination. What the Buddha declared for forty five years was nothing but the multiple applications of the knowledge of the interdependent origination. Without going for the incorporation of the all-knowing knowledge, penetrative wisdom that the Buddha showed in various spheres can be justified, since the interdependent origination is known as *Dhammadhatu,* the causal cosmic order through which one comprehends any given topic instantly.[60]

It is to be pointed out here that the theme of this volume, the commemoration of the 2600th anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment, was considered as the proper context to be highlighted with the foregoing comprehensive account. Attention is paid here to the multi-dimensional approach of the Theravada tradition towards explaining the path(s) leading to, and the cognitive components of, the enlightenment. My endeavour is to reconcile the information in the Theravada sources which superficially looks to be conflicting, divergent and even contradictory. The enlightenment, as suggested here, is an event the historicity of which, with less embellishments, can be gleaned from the Pali discourses. The very idea of this volume is based, as mentioned before, on this event and the date on which the Buddha is believed to have passed away as will be briefly examined below.

The 2600th Anniversary

The calculation of 2600 years from the Enlightenment of the Buddha which is felicitated by publishing this Volume is done on a simple logic. In 1956, the Theravada Buddhist countries, with the concurrence of other Buddhist traditions, commemorated the 2500th year of the Buddha's passing away. Since then, 55 years have passed. In other words, this year (2011) marks the 2555 years of the Buddha's passing away. As is well known, Prince Siddhartha became the Enlightened One at the age of 35. Since He passed away at the age of 80, the Buddha had the career of 45 year duration. When this period of 45 years is added to the 2555, this year (2011) marks the 2600th year of the Buddha's Enlightenment. There is another angle of this argument. The year 1956 was considered as marking the 2500th year from the passing away of the Buddha on the basis that the Buddha passed away in the year of 544 BCE Accordingly, this year (2011) marks the 2555th year of the Buddha's passing away. As mentioned before, the period that goes through from the enlightenment to the passing away is 45 years. Accordingly, up to this year (2011), 2600 years have passed from the Buddha's enlightenment.

I would like to state here that I am not disregarding the enormity of criticism leveled against this simple calculation. I am also aware of the magnitude of literature published during the last half century with multiple suggestions to arrive at the exact dating of the Buddha's passing away.[61] There are five theories that have come up so far in this regard.

1 The long chronology according to which the Buddha passed away in 544 BCE
2 The corrected long chronology according to which the Buddha passed away in 483/4 BCE
3 The short chronology according to which the Buddha passed away in 444 BCE
4 The dotted chronology according to which the Buddha passed away in 486 BCE
5 Gottingen chronology according to which the Buddha passed away in 404 BCE

As pointed out by Prebish, each of these five theories has its weaknesses and deficiencies.[62] Therefore, the succeeding four theories which are supposed to have been put forward to correct the long chronology are not convincing. The main reason for rejecting the long chronology is that it places the passing away of the Buddha 218 years before the consecration of king Asoka, but assumes the date of Asoka's coronation to the year 326 BCE The historicity of these figures are challenged on the ground the Hellenistic Monarchs mentioning in the Asoka's 13th major rock edict synchronize the reigns of Asoka. This particular rock edict, which is supposed to have been decreed in the 13th year from Asoka's coronation, is dated 255 BCE Asoka's consecration is accordingly assigned to the year 268 BCE[63] Therefore, there is a 60 year gap between the dates in the long chronology and the dates arrived at on the basis of the 13th rock edict. Since this argument in which imaginative inference plays a major role is not strong enough to discard the long chronology which is unanimously accepted by the Therevada tradition in Sri Lanka, Myanmmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. "It is the starting point of the Buddhist Era" which have shaped the history and culture in South and South-east Asia. Therefore, for this Volume, we rely on the chronology historicity of which is affirmed in the Dipavansa, Samantapasadika and Mahavansa. I believe that the minute differences in these three sources do not do any harm to the facts common to all three of them. The following facts are reiterated in the long chronology.

1 The First Buddhist Council was held after three/four months from the passing away of the Buddha.
2 The Second Buddhist Council was held after 100 years from the First Buddhist Council.
3 In the Canonical account of the First Buddhist Council the patronage of king Ajatasattu is not mentioned. Similarly, the patronage of Kalasoka is not mentioned in the Canonical account of the Second Buddhist Council. The community of monks took the sole responsibility of these two Councils, since they were held to uphold matters concerning the Dhamma and Vinaya. The state patronage towards the Councils is reported in the Chronicles and Commentaries.
4 The Third Buddhist Council was held in the reign of king Asoka approximately in the fourth decade of the third century BCE
5 Arahant Mahinda's arrival in Sri Lanka took place in the year 236/7 BCE

This information is common, obviously with minor variations, to the Dipavansa, Samantapasadika and Mahavansa.[64] The reliability of these three sources depends on the historical awareness maintained by the monks of the Theravada tradition. The glimpses thereof are seen in the Pali Canon itself. The biographical sketches of the Buddha, the information embedded in the introductory passages of the discourses, the incidents narrated as backgrounds to the Vinaya rules, the stories of contemporary kings, millionaires and ordinary men and women, the life stories of the religious teachers belonging to the 6th century BCE in India, the reporting of controversies, divergent views and disagreements among the disciples and the records of the proceedings of the first two Buddhist Councils, inter alia, reveal that the historical awareness of the Theravada tradition goes back to the time of the Buddha Himself. The habit of recording not only of major but also of minor incidents concerning the Sasana was continued till the Third Buddhist Council in India. After Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka, the same practice was carried on unabated at the Buddhist temples. These were the records that were utilized in compiling the Dipavansa, Samantapasadika and Mahavansa. In this regard I would like to quote what the Ven. Walpola Rahula observed in relation to the Mahavansa. "Although the Mahavansa is embellished with poetic diction and imagery, the authors seem to have followed the available sources very faithfully. Minute details found in these sources were carefully included in their work. Even the fact that a certain thing was not found in the sources is also particularly mentioned. The impartiality of the author of the first part of Mahavanasa is remarkable."[65] This observation is equally true with reference to the Dipavansa and Samantapasadika too.

Attention should be paid here to another point of vital importance common to all three sources mentioned above. That is the record of the lineage of Indian kings from Ajatasattu to Asoka and the Sri Lankan kings from Vijaya to Devanampiyatissa.[66] The number of years over which each of the Indian kings ruled over and the coronation and the number of the years over which each Sri Lankan king ruled in relation to the Indian counterpart are given in all these three sources. There is no doubt that these minute details are given on the basis of the sources available to the authors of the Dipavansa, Samantapasadika and Mahavanasa. When the clarity, precision and cross connection of these information are taken into account, it is highly improbable for the facts so mentioned to be imaginary. The histories found in the Dipavansa, Samantapasadika and Mahavansa are definitely more trustworthy than the dotted record,[67] which seems to have been utilized in deciding the year in which the passing away of the Buddha took place. Pachow has imagined a manuscript prepared in the First Buddhist Council where the Venerable Upali could mark a dot, year by year, a custom followed by his pupils till the Third Buddhist Council and continued in China till the Samantapasadika was translated in to Chinese. This is nothing but a fiction in the context of history of Buddhism. Contrary to this, information found in the Dipavansa, Samantapasadika and Mahavansa is a result of a careful scrutiny of the available written as well as oral sources of the Theravada tradition.

I would like to conclude this introductory essay by referring to a gross misinterpretation utilized in the short chronology which suggests that the coronation of king Asoka took place precisely 100 years after the Buddha's passing away.[68] It is said that there are two passages in the Dipavansa that support this view. They are stanzas 24-26 of Chapter One and stanzas 55-59 of Chapter Five in the Dipavansa.

The first reference runs as follows: "The Buddha passed away like the sun already set. On the fourth month after the passing away, the Council will be held. One Hundred and Eighteen years later, the Third Council is held for the continuous existence of the Sasana. There will be a king greatly virtuous and powerful in the continent of India famous as Asokadhamma."[69]

Accordingly, it is suggested that the Third Buddhist Council was held after 118 years from the Buddha's passing away. It is quite obvious that a stanza between stanzas 24 and 25 of the First Chapter in the Dipavansa is missing here, since there is no reference to the Second Buddhist Council. The sequence of the first Three Buddhist Councils is interrupted due to this missing stanza. It is illogical and unhistorical to mention the Third Buddhist Council overlooking the Second. This is quite possible due to the disorganized and unsystematic methodology followed in composing Dipavansa. "The rugged nature of its language and style, its grammatical peculiarities, its many repetitions and the absence of any plan or scheme in its narrative convince the reader that the Dipavansa is not the continuous work of one individual but a heterogeneous collection of material like ballads of some unskilled versifiers who lived at different periods in different parts of the island."[70] The twenty-fifth stanza of Chapter One of the Dipavansa, therefore, counts 118 years not from the Buddha's passing away but from the date of the Second Buddhist Council. As I will show below, the evidence scattered in the Dipavansa itself stands testimony to this effect.

The relevant section of the second reference runs as follows: "In future, after 118 years, a pleasant and qualified monk will appear. At that time the ruler of Pataliputta was Asoka, the leader. He ruled the kingdom being virtuous and conscious of its prosperity."[71]

It has been observed that these stanzas too suggest that king Asoka came to the scene exactly after 118 years from the Buddha's passing away. The 55th stanza of Chapter Five is prefaced by the "end of Acariyavada" where the Second Council is elaborately discussed. Therefore, it is crystal clear that the 118 years calculated in this particular stanza are not from the Buddha's passing away but from the date of the Second Council. The 53rd stanza of the same chapter observes that "there was nothing in the first hundred years. In the second hundred year, seventeen opposing schools arose in the religion of the Buddha."[72] Therefore, 118 years calculated in 55th stanza fall within the period between the First Council and the Second Council during which period the schism arose in the history of Buddhism. There is no implication at all in these stanzas that Asoka reigned 118 years after the Buddha's demise.

The Dipavansa, in its fourth chapter, reiterates that the Vajjiputtaka monks raised the ten points after 100 years from the Buddha's passing away.[73] This is again confirmed in Chapter Five.[74] The Dipavansa, in clear terms, informs us that king Asoka's coronation took place after 218 years from the passing away of the Buddha.[75] Again, it is said in the Dipavansa, that 204 years have elapsed from the Buddha's passing away when Mahinda, the son of Asoka, was born.[76] Referring to the troubles that arose in the history of Buddhism during the time of King Asoka, the Dipavansa observes that the dissension took place among the Theravadians when 236 years have passed from the Buddha's passing away.[77] Since the author of the Dipavansa was quite confident in these dates, there was no possibility for him to state that Asoka's coronation took place precisely 100 years after the Buddha's passing away. It is only an assumption of those who had not studied the Dipavansa in its totality. As far as the information available in the Dipavansa is concerned, the "notion of short chronology" is an imagined myth.

The Theravada tradition is, therefore, not convinced that the passing away of the Buddha should be assigned to a date later than the year 544 B.C.E As mentioned before, this year marks the beginning of the Buddhist Era from which all events of the history of Buddhism have been calculated right through. The Buddhist writers of Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand, in the past as well as the present, have adhered to 544 BCE as the year of the Buddha's passing away when they wanted to declare the year of composition / publication of each of their writings on the basis of the Buddhist Era. In calculating 2600th anniversary of the Buddha's Enlightenment, this Volume had no other choice except conforming to this long lived acclamation.

The Scope of this Volume

As more or less universally accepted now, Buddhism is a system of multi-dimensional thought. Early Buddhism itself has philosophical, ethical, sociological, cosmological, legal, political, aesthetic, economic and religious analyses dealt with comprehensively in the discourses. In addition to these aspects, the life story of the Buddha, at least in a sketchy form, has become a part and parcel of Early Buddhism. From these parameters, which are generally believed as the basic tenets of the Theravada, two branches with multiple off-shoots known as Mahayana and Vajrayana emerged later. There are hundreds of articles, monographs and books written on these three major branches of Buddhism during the last century of its history paying attention to the divergent schools which opened up new ideologies and interpretations. Since they are adequately dealt with time and again, it was decided that this Volume should not pay deliberate attention to the topics mentioned above.

Similarly, the Buddhist literature is also left out as a separate topic in this Volume. The reasons for this is that it is also extensively analyzed by various authors in the West as well as in the East during the last century. As a result, the Buddhist world has a fair knowledge of the Buddhist literature available in Pali, Sanskrit, Prakrit, Chinese and Tibetan. The Buddhist manuscripts discovered from Nepal, Tibet, China and Central Asia have now been minutely scanned and analyzed. The Pali Canon, its Commentaries, sub-Commentaries and exegetical works are repeatedly discussed and interpreted more than any branch of the Buddhist literature now. The literary reviews in the books on Buddhist topics have again and again pointed out the importance, magnitude and usefulness of Buddhist literature in rebuilding the religious system of Buddhism.

The history of Buddhism in its entirety is also overlooked in this Volume. Therefore, the topics like Early Buddhist Councils, the Buddhist Education, the Buddhist Art and Architecture, the Buddhist Scholars and the Buddhist places of Interests are not separately discussed in this Volume. The format adopted in this Volume is to highlight the geographical expansion of Buddhism in the last 26 centuries from the Buddha's passing away. It was traditionally believed that the Buddhism has been known to the countries like India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, China, Japan, Korea, Tibet, Mongolia, Nepal, Malaysia, Vietnam, Central Asia and Indonesia. The modern scenario of the spread of Buddhism is quite different from this traditional Buddhist map. Buddhism has now gone to the new frontiers of the globe. It has become a living force in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and in the countries of Western Europe. Russia had been one of the early centres of Buddhist Studies before it moved into France and the United Kingdom. Some of the South American countries now have been inspired by the introduction of Buddhism. It has become a vibrant movement in modern Singapore. Surprisingly and interestingly, the continent of Africa has also shown interest to learn Buddhism. What is unfolded in this Volume is this global spread of Buddhism covering all five continents of human habitats. Each chapter of this Volume is dedicated to the introduction and development of Buddhism and its contribution to Art, Architecture and Literature with special reference to Buddhist educational institutions, Buddhist scholars, Buddhist places of interest and cultural and political implication of Buddhism in each of the geographical units identified. Accordingly, on the memorable occasion of the 2600th Anniversary of the Buddha's Enlightenment, this volume opens up a world of Buddhism hitherto unknown to many.

Notes

1 Oldeuburg, H., *Buddha*, London and Edinburgh, 1882.
2 *Kathavatthu*, 142-143.
3 *Kathavatthu*, 143.
4 *Kathavatthu*, 559.
5 *Majjhima Nikaya* (=MN),ii. Read for instance the Sangharava Sutta.
6 Rhys Davids, T.W., *Buddhist India* (= BI), Motilal Banarsidass, 1987, 16.
7 *Digha Nikaya* (=DN), iii, 93.
8 *Anguttara Nikaya* (=AN), iv, 223.
9 *Sanyutta Nikaya* (=SN), I, 43.
10 SN. I. 42.
11 *Suttanipata* (=Sn), 11.
12 Sn, 119.
13 *Vinayapitaka* (=V) iii, 47.
14 DN. iii, 81.
15 DN. Iii, 82-93.
16 DN. Iii, 93.
17 SN. I, 6.
18 SN. I, 69.
19 BI. 61.
20 Ibid., 61.
21 Ibid., 103-104.
22 SN. iv, 387.
23 AN. I, 116-117.
24 AN. I, 115.
25 V. ii, 154: *Jātaka* I, 242, 269.
26 V. I, 15 ff.
27 MN. I, 353.
28 DN. I, 157-158; SN. ii, 20; iii, 99, 182.
29 Ibid.
30 Bhikkhu Nanamoli, *The Life of the Buddha*, Kandy, 1972, 22.
31 MN. I. 167-168, 241; II. 213.
32 MN. I. 246-247; II. 212.
33 MN. II. 262.
34 DN. I. 70ff.
35 MN. I. 75.
36 *Encounters with the Word, Essays to honour Aloysius Pieris s.j.*, Colombo, 2004, 225-234.
37 MN. I. 163ff.
38 V I. 5ff.
39 MN. I. 75.
40 V. I. 11.
41 *Harmony and sharing, the East Asian Culture and Buddhism*, Korea, 2003, pp. 415-424, 2003.
42 V. I. 10; SN. II. 106.
43 SN. II. 106.
44 MN. II. 162; DN. II. 70ff.
45 AN. III. 38.
46 MN. I. 166-167, 240; II. 212.
47 MN. I. 167-168.
48 *Pali – English Dictionary*, PTS, 411.

49 Ibid.

50 MN. II. 12.

51 Hiriyanna, N., *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, London, 1972, 132.

52 DN. II. 311f; MN. III. 252.

53 MN. II. 212.

54 MN. I. 35-36.

55 MN. III. 71ff.

56 Jayatilake, K.N., *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, London, 1963, 369-415.

57 Jataka I. 75-76.

58 V. I. 1-2.

59 SN. II. 104-105.

60 MN. I. 396; DN. II. 9.

61 In 1988, Buddhist Symposium was convened by Heinz Bechert at the University of Gottingen to examine and decide the date of the passing away of the Buddha. The Buddhist scholars from all schools, East and West, participated in the Symposium. The literature that has been published by that time on this topic was minutely scanned while submitting new theories and proposals. After the Symposium, the papers submitted were published in three volumes under the editorship of Heinz Bechert carrying the title *Die Datierung der Historischen Buddha* in 1991, 1992 and 1997. These three volumes carry all the data available up to their publications on the issue of dating of the (Demise of) Buddha.

62 Prebish, Charles, S., "Cooking the Buddhist Books: The Implication of the new Dating of the Buddha for the History of Early Indian Buddhism," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 2008, 1-21.

63 Read Gombrich, Richard C., Dating the Buddha: A Red Herring Revealed, in Die Daiterung des Historischen Buddha, Vol. II, pg. 237-259. The History of Early Buddhism: Advances in 1950 in Indological studies and South Asian Bibliography- A conference 1966, 14, Calcutta National Library, 1988.

64 Read the first seven chapters of the Dipavansa, introductory chapter of the Samantapasadika and first ten chapters of the Mahavansa.

65 Rahula, Walpola., *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Colombo, 1956, xxiii.

66 See end note 61.

67 Pachow, W., "A Study of the Dotted Record", *Journal of Oriental American Society*, 85, 3, July-Sept. 1965, 342-349.

68 Bechert Heinz, Introductory Essay, *Die Datierung des Historischen Buddha*, Vol. I, pp. 2-21.

69 *Dipavansa*, Chapter 1, stanzas 24-26.

70 Rahula, (1956) xxi.

71 *Dipavamsa*, Chapter Five, satanzas 55, 59.

72 *Dipavamsa*, Chapter Five, Stanza 53.

73 *Dipavamsa*, Chapter Four, stanza 52-53.

74 *Dipavamsa*, Chapter Five, stanza 16-17.

75 *Dipavamsa*, Chapter Six, stanza 1.

76 *Dipavamsa*, Chapter Six, stanza 19-20.

77 *Dipavamsa*, Chapter Four, stanza 37, 44.

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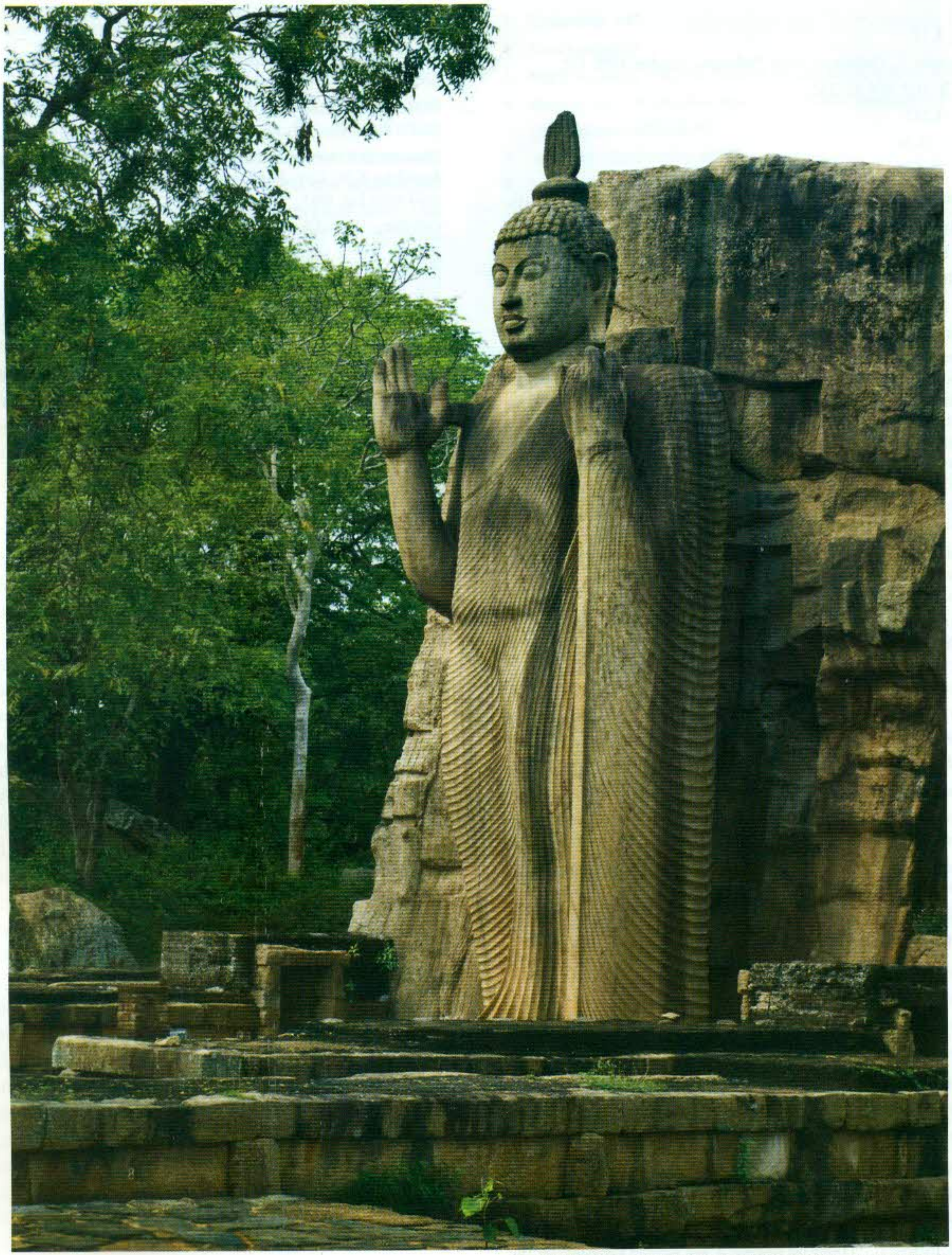
Rahula, Walpola., *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, Colombo: M.D. Gunasena, 1956.

Note : The Pali text used for this essay are the publications of the Pali Text Society, London.



Avukana Buddha image stands on a lotus pedestal - 42 feet in height

ESSAY 2

Global Spread of Buddhism Through the Ages

Olcott Gunasekera

Introduction

Even after 2,600 years the message of the Buddha, the All Enlightened One, is as fresh and as incontrovertible as on the day he set in motion the Wheel of Dhamma (*dhammacakka*) in Migadaya, Isipatana, to five ascetic monks. The scope of this essay is to give the highlights of the gradual spread of this noble teaching, carried out with missionary ardour by those who accepted the teaching, being beckoned by the clarion call:

> Released am I, monks, from all ties, whether human or divine. You *too* are delivered from fetters whether human or divine. Go now and wander for the welfare and happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, for the gain, welfare and happiness of gods and men. Let not two of you proceed in the same direction. Proclaim the *Dhamma* (doctrine) that is excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, excellent in the end, possessed of meaning and the letter and utterly perfect. Proclaim the life of purity, the holy life consummate and pure. There are beings with little dust in their eyes that will be lost through not hearing the *Dhamma*. There will be beings who will understand the *Dhamma*. I too shall go to Uruwela, to Senanigama to teach the *Dhamma.'* (*Vinaya, Mahavagga*).

This missionary zeal is witnessed throughout the long period of Buddhist history, when monks and nuns travelled far and wide with no intention of returning to their homelands, with the absolute desire of making known the noble Dhamma. Wherever Buddhism spread there was a greater enrichment of life and it brought about a subtle revolution in the hearts of men:

> Now this I say, Nigrodha, not desiring to win pupils, not wishing to make others fall from their religious vows, not wishing to establish you in wrong ways or to make you give up ways that are good. Not so. But Nigrodha there are bad things not put away, things that have to do with corruption. It is for the rejection of these things that I teach you the Dhamma, walking according to which, things concerned with corruption shall be put away and wholesome things shall be brought to increase. (*Udumbarika Sutta, Digha Nikaya*)

The teaching of the Buddha is like a great oasis that is without boundaries and anyone is free to dip into the water and quench their thirst and be reborn with a fresh outlook on life. It is a noble living, where both the decision-maker and the decision-taker is one's self. Only the Path has been shown by the Buddha. The noble quests of pathfinders are evident throughout Buddhism's long history and hence wherever the religion spread it has ennobled the lives of many. From five ascetics it has now become the faith of about a fifth of the world's population.

The First Forty-five Years

According to the most popular tradition, the *Parinibbana* (demise) of the Buddha occurred 2,555 years ago (544 BCE) at Kusinagar, the land of the Mallas, when the Buddha was eighty-years-old. He gained enlightenment when he was thirty-five at Buddha Gaya, (modern Bodh Gaya) in the State of Bihar. He expounded the Dhamma for the first time at Isipatana near Benares to five ascetics who attended on him for nearly six years when he was practicing the severest austerities in a vain bid to find deliverance from birth, decay and death. From the age of thirty-five until he was eighty, he and his followers walked the highways and byways of ancient Madhya-desa spreading the noble teaching. The Buddha's daily programme was one of compassion to the world around him. He slept only for a minimum amount of time. The hours he was awake he used for the happiness of others. Many came in search of him. But he also travelled with the monks in search of those who needed help. It was not always an easy journey. The Buddhist texts refer to the rainy seasons when the Buddha received only horse food as alms. He slept under trees, in cemeteries, in groves and gardens as a true missionary. At the time of his Parinibbana his mission was complete, as the *sasana* (dispensation) of *bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, upasakas and upasikas* (monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen), was firmly established in Madhya-desa.

The Manorathapurani, the commentary on the Anguttara Nikaya, specifies the names of the places where the Buddha spent the rainy seasons, and these can be considered as centres of activity during the first forty-five years. They are Saranath (first year), Rajagaha (second to fourth; seventeeth and twentieth), Vesali (fifth), Mankula-Pabbata (sixth), Tavatimsa (seventh), Bhesakalavana (eighth), Kausambi (ninth), Parileyya (tenth), Nala (eleventh), Veranja (twefth), Caliya-Pabbata (thirteenth), Savatthi (fourteenth; twenty-first to forty-fifth), Kapilavattu (fifteenth), and Alavi (sixteenth). Other places where the Buddha delivered important discourses were Kesaputta of the Kalamas, Ramagama of the Koliyas, Kusinara and Pava of the Mallas, Allakappa of the Bulis, Mithila of the Videhas, Kasi, Kosambi, Sankassa, Saketa and the kingdoms of Kosala and Magadha.

These references indicate the geographical area within which many of the Buddha's activities were concentrated. His followers could have been located outside these areas, especially in the main towns along the trade routes. Ujjeni in Avanti has to be especially mentioned. As there were many people from commercial families who accepted the teachings of the Buddha, the initial spread of Buddhism to distant places was by traders. The first two laymen, Tapussa and Bhallika, were traders and reference has been made to them in an inscription found in Tiriyaya on the east coast of Sri Lanka, north of Trincomalee. Similarly, there is a tradition in Burma according to which these relics are enshrined in the famous Shwe Dagon Pagoda. There is also a tradition, supported by archaeological findings that these two traders were from Afghanistan. Indeed, the modern Balkh is formed from Bhallika, a place where a stupa was constructed by the trader of this name. It could be inferred that there would have been small Buddhist communities outside the Madhya Desa (Bihar area) even during the time of the Buddha.

01-100 Years after the Parinibbana of the Buddha (544-444 BCE)

One of the most important events was holding the First Council under the chairmanship of Arahant Kassapa Maha Thera at Rajagaha in the second month of the rainy season immediately after the Buddha's demise. It consolidated the *dhamma* (teachings) and the *vinaya* (rules of discipline) as the 500 Arahants who assembled for the First Council confirmed the *dhamma* and the *vinaya* as expounded by the Ven. Ananda and the Ven. Upali.

101-200 Years after Parinibbana (443-344 BCE)

One hundred years after the Parinibbana, in the time of King Kalasoka, the Second Council was held at Vaisali with 100 Arahants. The immediate cause was the observation made by Arahant Yasa regarding ten practices of the Vajjian monks considered against the Vinaya rules. In the *Culla Vagga,* which gives a description of this Council, distinction has been made between the monks of the East and West (*Pubba-aparanta*). A committee was appointed with four Arahants representing these two broad divisions and the residences of the eight monks indicate a further spread of Buddhism to the West. The eight Arahants with their residences according to the different sources are Sabbakami and Khujja Sobhita (Vaisali), Vasabha Gamika (Pataliputra), and Salha (Sankasya) from the *Pubbadesa*; and Revata (Soreyya/Sonaka/Han-no), Sambhuta Sanavasi (Ahoganga), Yasa (Sonaka/Kosala), and Sumana from the *Aparantadesa*.

The decision of the elders was not accepted and the first schism occurred with the secession of the Mahasanghikas. During the course of the century the Sthaviravadins (Theravadins) further broke into eleven sub-sects and the Mahasanghikas into seven sub-sects. These were the eighteen sub-sects that arose during the century and referred to in the Third Council.

201-300 Years after Parinibbana (343-144 BCE)

This was one of the most momentous periods in the spread of Buddhism. An important political development was the conquest of the Sindh region by Alexander the Great in 325 BCE. It was the forerunner to the establishment of the Bactrian Greek kingdom which linked Greece to Northern India. It stimulated trade and intensified cultural interchange in the centuries following. Alexander's expedition also may have united the rest of North India as seen during the period of Chandragupta Maurya. King Asoka (264-221 BCE.) built a mighty empire which for the first time brought the whole of the Indian subcontinent under a single hegemony. These political developments, along with the acceptance of Buddhism by Emperor Asoka, were extremely important for Buddhism.

The Third Council was held at Pataliputra under the chairmanship of the Ven. Moggali-putta Tissa Maha Thera at the request of Emperor Asoka, after which, according to the *Mahavamsa* (Ch. XII), missionaries were sent to nine countries with results as shown in the table.

	Country	*Leader of Mission*	*Approx. no. accepting Buddhism**	*Approx. no. Ordained*
1.	Kasmira-Gandhara	Majjhantika Thera	80,000	100,000
2.	Mahisa-mandala (Vindhya Region) region	Mahadeva Thera	40,000	40,000
3.	Vanavasa (North Kanara)	Rakkhita Thera	60,000	31,000
4.	Aparantaka (Gujerat, Kathiawar, Kach, Sindh)	Dhammarakkhita Thera	37,000	1,000
5.	Maharattha (Maharashtra)	Mahadhammarakkhita Thera	84,000	13000
6.	Yona (Yavana)	Maharakkhita Thera	107,000	10,000
7.	Himavanta (Himalaya Region)	Majjhima Thera and four others	80 crores	500,000 (100,000 each of kingdoms)
8.	Suvannabhumi	Sona & Uttara Theras	60,000	3,500 sons & 1,500 daughters
9.	Lanka (Ceylon)	Mahinda Thera & four others	Buddhism became the State religion	

The rock edicts and pillar inscriptions of Asoka corroborate the *Mahavamsa* regarding the countries with which Emperor Asoka had cultural contacts. The location of the edicts of Asoka is evidence of the extent of the empire. According to the Girnar Rock Edict II and III, his missions had gone to the kingdoms of the Colas, Pandyas, Satiyaputa, Ketalaputa, and as far as Tambapanni (Sri Lanka) in the South. In addition missions travelled to the kingdoms of Antiyoka (Antiochus II Theos of Syria, 261-246 BCE), Thulamaya (Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt, 285-241 BCE), Antekina (Antigonas Gonatas of Macedonia, 271-239 BCE), Maka (Magas of Cyrene, 300-250 BCE), and Alikyasudala (Alexander of Corinth, 252-244 BCE or Alexander of Epirus, 212-255 BCE) in the West. During Emperor Asoka's time, Yona or the Greek country comprised the kingdoms of Antiochus II of Syria and Antigonas Gonatas of Macedonia

The thera who was sent as a missionary to Aparantaka was called Yonaka Dhammarakkhita, "Dhammarakkhita of the Yonaka country". This is perhaps evidence to show that even before Asoka, Buddhist teachings may have been taken by bhikkhus and Buddhist traders, though not in an organized manner. The above records show that during Asoka's time Buddhism was firmly established in the countries mentioned.

The only unidentifiable name is Suvannabhumi, which was earlier taken as Lower Burma (Ramannadesa). Fleet takes it as Bengal, while some take it as the whole of present day Burma, Thailand and Cambodia. Although there are differences of opinion regarding its identity, there is no dispute that Suvannabhumi was to the east of Asoka's empire. In this connection the important sea-port of Tamralipti plays a dominant role: many Buddhist missions taking the sea route left from there.

The centre of Buddhist activity was Pataliputta, the Asoka's capital. A most important outpost was Sanchi, which has extensive Buddhist remains belonging to the third century BCE. Sanchi is of special significance to Buddhists as Cunningham in his excavations found a casket of relics which according to the engravings belonged to the two chief disciples of the Buddha. The historicity of Moggaliputta Tissa Maha Thera was also established by a similar relic casket. All these are further evidence of the spread of Buddhism during this time.

301-400 Years after Parinibbana (243-144 BCE)

Around 200 BCE, the Bactrian Empire extended beyond Punjab and Sindh (Gandhara) to the Kathiawar area. This is very significant because for the first time the Indus and the Omus valleys were brought under a single political power. This led to a rich intermixture of Indian, Persian, Hellenic and Chinese cultures, and more significant it provided the necessary environment for Buddhist monks to carry the message of the Buddha beyond India to Central Asia.

In 211 BCE, the first Buddhist monastery was built in Khotan. According to Khotanese records, the kingdom of Khotan in Central Asia was founded by a son of Asoka called Kustana. Buddhism was introduced during the time of his grandson Vijayasambhava. Until the time of the Muslim invaders in the tenth century CE, Khotan remained a Buddhist kingdom. Its contribution to the spread of Buddhism to the other Asian countries is inestimable.

In India Buddhism flourished, though there was a major persecutor, Pusyamitra Sunga. Famous Buddhist monuments like the Bharhut Stupa, the Karle caves and the Sanchi stupa testify to the popular support and the great prosperity enjoyed by Buddhism during this century. These monuments also show the impact of outside influences on Buddhism.

401-500 Years after Parinibbana (143-44 BCE)

The archaeological excavations of Sir Aurel Stein testify that from the time of Emperor Asoka, Taxila grew as a famous seat of Buddhist learning. However, due to the lack of adequate data the vast influence this centre of learning would have had can only be surmised.

The nomadic hordes, especially the Huns and Yueh-chis, pressured the Sakas, who in turn forced the Bactrian Greeks south of the Hindu Kush. Sagala or Sakala (modern Sialkot) east of the River Jhelum became one of the capitals. The most famous Greek ruler was King Menander, known to the Buddhist world because of the Milinda-panha, the "Questions of Milinda". According to the Milinda-panha, King Menander lived approximately 500 years after the demise of the Buddha (*parinibbanato pancavassasata atikkante*). This Buddhist treatise, which is unique in post-canonical literature, is testimony not only to the erudition of the Ven. Nagasena, but also of the vast knowledge King Menanderhad of Buddhism. This is also proof that the teachings of the Buddha were very well-known among the Greeks by this time.

King Menander was a great champion of Buddhism and according to the Sialkot inscription he helped in the propagation of Buddhism in the region between the Hindu Kush and Sindh. Taxila would have been in its highest glory and would have attracted scholars from Greece and Persia. It is claimed by scholars today that both the intellectualism and humanising influence of Buddhism has had a direct impact on the birth of modern Christianity.

During the same time a great historical event occurred in Sri Lanka. It was in connection with the foundation laying ceremony of the Great Thupa in Anuradhapura during the time of King Dutugemunu of Sri Lanka (161-137 BCE.). According to the *Mahavamsa* (Ch XXIX vv 29-45), many monks from foreign countries participated in this ceremony. The account is useful to determine the more famous Buddhist centres of the time. The total number of foreign monks visiting Sri Lanka for this occasion was over 1.3 million[1]. Some may disagree regarding the number, but it is clear from the account that the concentration of bhikkhus was in Pataliputta, Kasmira and Pallavabhogga regions.

Special mention has to be made of Pallavabhogga, which is taken as Persia. This is a possible interpretation as in the list it appears between Kasmira and Alasanda, the city of the Yonas, and geographically Persia is between Kashmir and the land of the Greeks. Pallavabhogga is not mentioned among the countries where Buddhist missions were sent during the time of Emperor Asoka. Hence, Buddhism was most likely established in this region after Asoka, during the heyday of the Bactrian Greek Empire. It should be noted that the largest number monks who came to participate in the ceremony in Anuradhapura was from Pallavabhogga. Theravada Buddhist tradition may have reached its acme during this century.

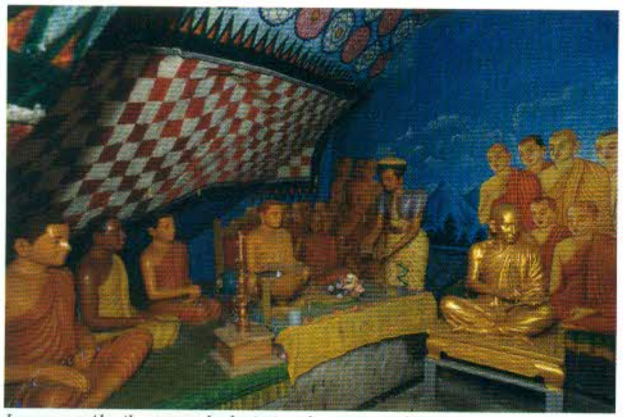
501-600 Years after Parinibbana (45 BCE-56 CE)

The Bactrian Greeks were not able to withstand the pressure from the north by the Sakas and from the West by the Pahlavas (Parthians). By about 15 BCE the Gandhara region was conquered by the first Saka-Pahlava king and twenty years later Sialkot too was conquered.

Although there was a change in the political scene, Buddhism was still the principal religion south of the Hindu Kush. The Yuehchis who displaced the Sakas around 50 CE also came under the influence of Buddhism and this helped the entry of the religion to Central Asia.

There is positive evidence that small Buddhist colonies had been founded in southern Central Asia from Khotan to the Labnor region even before the Christian era. According to Chinese records Buddhism also entered China in 2 BCE when Yi-chen, an envoy of the king of the Yueh-chis arrived in Changan (modern Sian), the then capital of China, and taught Buddhist scriptures orally to Ching-La, a scholar of the Imperial Academy.

In Sri Lanka, the fourth council according to Theravada tradition was held in Alokavihara, near Matale, during the reign of King Vattha Gamini Abhaya (29-11 BCE). Five hundred monks, presided over by Rakkhita Mahathera, committed the entire Buddhist canon (Tipitaka) and the commentaries



Images at Aluvihara temple depicting the writing of Tripitaka

(Atthakatha) into writing. This timely action of the Sinhala Buddhist monks helped in preserving the original Buddhist canon to this day, and make Sri Lanka the home of pristine Buddhism.

The famous *caitya* halls at Nasik, Karle, Junnar in the Maharastra state of India, date from this period. Between the second century and third century CE the stupas of Amaravati and Nagarjunikonda in the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh and at Bhattiprolu, Jegayyapata and Ghanti sala in the Krishna district were constructed. Jayasinghe Perumal, King of Kera (Chola), was also said to be a Buddhist.

According to known records, Buddhism was undoubtedly the principal faith of many of the rulers of the time and the patronage they extended was extremely helpful in the spread of Buddhism during this century.

601-700 Years after Parinibbana (57-156 CE)

This was another momentous period for Buddhism. The location of activity had shifted to the North Frontier area of India and beyond. The most notable of rulers was the Kushan ruler Kanishka, who governed a wide tract of land including Kabul, Gandhara, Sindh, North-West India, Kashmir and part of Madhya Pradesh from 78 CE (henceforward all dates are CE but not identified as such). According to tradition it was remorse at the bloodshed during his conquest of the Central Asian kingdoms of Kashgar, Yarkhand, and Khotan that brought King Kanishka closer to Buddhism, as had happened to Emperor Asoka due to the Kalinga war. Kanishka was a great patron of Buddhism and the second wave of Buddhist missionaries that resulted in the peaceful spread of Buddhism to Central Asia, China, Mongolia, Korea, Japan, Tibet, and Russian Siberia commenced during his rule.

According to Xuan Zang, the Chinese pilgrim scholar, a Buddhist Council was held during King Kanishka's time presided over by the Ven. Vasumitra and assisted by the Ven. Asvaghosa. The venue was either Jelandhar or Kashmir in Kundalavana vihara. This council is not referred to in the *Mahavamsa* or any of the Pali literature and was attended chiefly by the monks of the Sarvastivada School. The most notable activity was the compilation of the commentaries on the Pitakas in Sanskrit, namely the Upadesa Vaibhasa, Vinaya Vaibhasa, and Abhidhamma Vaibhasa. Although Xuan Zang makes no reference to the language used in the council, most probably it was Sanskrit. This may have increased the split between the Northern and Southern schools, for Sanskrit thereafter became the *lingua franca* of the Northern schools, which were mainly Mahayana, as against Pali which remained the language of the Theravada tradition preserved in Sri Lanka.

Ola Leaf

The Fourth Council gave the seal of authority to the later developments. Although the Sarvastivada Tipitaka, portions of which were found in the excavations of Sir Aurel Stein in Central Asia, was not very different to the Pali original, language became a barrier to communication. This brought about a new direction in the spread of Buddhism, especially, outside India. A substantial knowledge of Sanskrit was considered essential for a thorough grasp of the Buddha's teaching.

The persons who spread Buddhism were great scholars in their own right and the spread of Buddhism was initially confined to the translation of Buddhist texts from Sanskrit to the national languages. The spread of Buddhism in China was, in essence, inseparable from the task of translating Buddhist scriptures into Chinese. The first of the great scholar-monks, a literary genius, was Asvaghosa to whose credit are classics like Buddhacarita. His other works are Saundhrananda and Sariputra Prakarana.

One of the important outposts of Buddhism in Central Asia was the kingdom of Kuche, one of the most powerful of the four states in the northern part of Turkestan. According to the Chinese annals of the third century, there were over 1,000 stupas and temples. It is also recorded that Kuchean monks had travelled to China and had participated in translating Buddhist texts into Chinese.

The official introduction of Buddhism to China was in 67, when a mission sent to India by Emperor Ming-Ti (58-76) of the Han Dynasty returned to the capital of Luoyang accompanied by the Ven. Dharmaraksa and the Ven. Kasyapa MaT'anga carrying for the first time Buddhist scriptures and images under royal patronage.

From Kabul, Buddhism also spread during this time to ancient Khorezan, to the North West of Kabul. As time went by, many Buddhist centres appeared in the vast area between the Caspian Sea and the Arals Sea in Russia.

Buddhism also spread to Siam, modern Thailand. According to archaeological finds at Pong Tuk and Phra Pathom, fifty and sixty miles respectively west of Bangkok, remains of a religious building, images of the Buddha, and inscribed terracotta with Buddhist symbols have been found. They date from about the first or second century, and it could be inferred that Buddhism was present from about the first century. Amaravati and Nagarjunikonda in South India and Mahavihara in Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka were centres for the spread of Buddhism to the South-East Asia region.

The history of Buddhism in the different countries shows that the religion had always brought about a cultural efflorescence. For the first time during this period the Buddha is depicted in person. Among the coins minted by King Kanishka was one with the figure of the Buddha. Also a reliquary with the Buddha depicted in the round has been found when the principal stupa of King Kaniska near Peshawar was excavated. This was a new development due to Greek influence.

Prior to this, as seen in the bas reliefs at Sanchi, the Buddha was represented only by symbols. This development provided vast opportunities to the sculptor and the painter to excel. The new religion became a source of great inspiration to the Greco-Roman craftsmen. There was a blending of Greco-Roman art forms with Buddhist thought in the official art of the Kushan rulers, and as it reached its maturity in the Gandhara region it is popularly referred to as Gandhara art.

In describing the art form of this school, Rawlinson states that although the subject matter of Gandhara art is predominantly Buddhist, many of the motifs discernible in the sculptures are of either western Asiatic or Hellenistic origin. This again re-emphasizes the close relationship, commercial and cultural, that existed between Gandhara and the Roman West. With the spread of Buddhism into Central Asia, the impact of Gandhara art in the art and architecture of Central Asia was very noticeable. The Buddha image became the symbol of unity of all Buddhists. Although there were language and other barriers, the image of the Buddha made them one.

701-800 Years after Parinibbana (157-256 CE)

Buddhism was still the foremost religion. It had spread throughout Central Asia without any bloodshed and was knocking at the door of China. There was much opposition to Buddhism from the indigenous religious systems especially from the protagonists of Confucius and Laozi. However, Buddhist texts continued to be translated into Chinese and influenced Chinese thought. The richness of Buddhism both as a religion and a philosophy made a special appeal to the Chinese literati. One of them, Mengzi, wrote a special treatise comparing Buddhism with the teachings of Confucius and Lao Tse. Such writings and the influence of great Indian scholars, and their disciplined life and profundity, helped Buddhismgradually take root in China.

In the West, there are references to monastic sects like the Theraputaes, which is interpreted as a distortion of the word Theraputta, Scholars refer to certain common characteristics between the Gnosticism of Greece and the views of Mahayana Buddhism. In the first and second centuries there was a growing recognition of asceticism. Plotinus (204/5-210), one of the greatest philosophers of the third century and the founder of Neo-Platonism, was influenced by Ammonius Saccus (115-242), who was lecturing in Alexandria after abandoning Christianity. He was so taken up by the wisdom of the East that he visited the region and later returned to Rome in 224, where he lived and lectured for the rest of his life.

During the first two centuries after Christ the Christian religion gradually spread throughout the Roman Empire. The conversion of Constantine the Great enabled Christianity to firmly establish itself and from about the fifth century Christianity became the official religion. With these developments in the West the spread of Buddhism to European countries was delayed by nearly 1,500 years.

In India, however, new centres of Buddhism were emerging, such as Kanheri, where there was a large monastic establishment with over 100 caves dating from about the second century.

Nagarjuna (circa 150) a great Buddhist dialectician who is acclaimed to be the chief exponent of the Madhayntika Philosophy, a systematized form of the Sunyata doctrine of the Pragnaparamita treatises, also lived in this century. All accounts agree in connecting his place of residence with Dhanyakataka or Sriparvata in the Andhra country (Amaravati or Nagarjunikonda). The Madhyamika system which he perfected has had a continuous history of development from this time until the total disappearance of Buddhism from India (eleventh century).

One of Nagarjuna's chief disciples was Aryadeva (circa 180/200) one of the "four suns", according to Xuan Zang, which illumined the world; the other three being Nagarjuna, Asvaghosa, and Kumaralabdha. Aryadeva was from Sri Lanka, which also shows that the different schools had its protagonists all over the Buddhist world.

Amaravati and Nagarjunikonda developed as eminent centres of Buddhism. The art and architecture of Amaravati in the later Andhra period (25 BCE-320 CE) influenced the architectural traditions of Sri Lanka and the rest of South-East Asia. This is an indication of the leadership given by Amaravati to the spread of Buddhism during this period.

In the Chola country the great literary work of the Third Sangam period, the epic Manimekhala, bears testimony to the profound influence Buddhism has had and the support to Buddhism of the Tamil rulers. It can be inferred that Buddhism remained a living force in India that influenced not only religious life but also the art, architecture, drama and literature of the people of India from north to south, east to west.

From southern India and Sri Lanka, Buddhism spread beyond their coasts. According to the Chinese chronicles of the third century, there was a Buddhist population of over 100,000 families in the kingdom of Lin-yang located by Sinologists in central Burma.

In Vietnam there is an inscription discovered at Vo-Canh referring to the introduction of Buddhism during this time.

801-900 Years after Parinibbana (257-356 CE)

One of the major political events in India during this century was the rise of the Gupta Empire under Chandra Gupta I in 320. It held sway in northern and central India up to 606, and reached its political climax during the reign of Samudra Gupta. Although the Gupta kings were Bhagavatas, they were sympathetic towards Buddhism. Certain Gupta kings, like Budha Gupta as the name indicates, were Buddhists. An efflorescence of Buddhist art and architecture occurred during the Gupta period.

Most notable during this century was the influence of two great Buddhist scholars, Asanga and Vasubandhu, brothers born in Purusapura (Peshawar) in the Gandhara district. Originally they belonged to the Sarvastivada School. Later Asanga (circa 350) became the most famous exponent of the Yogacara or Vijnanavada School founded by Maitreya or Maitreyanatha. Later he induced his younger brother Vasubandhu to join him. Vasubandhu (280-360) is famous for his Abhidharmakosa, considered an encyclopaedia of Buddhist philosophy. This particular treatise has proved invaluable in the spread of Buddhism in Asia. He also wrote commentaries on the Saddharmapundarika sutra, Maha-parinirvana sutra and the Vajrachedika prajnaparamita. His Vijnanaptimatrata-siddhi is considered the basic work of this school. During their time the school reached its height in power and influence.

According to Chinese records, towards the end of this century (i.e. mid-fourth century), a Buddhist monk by the name of Vinitharna left Nagarjunikonda and travelled through Sri Lanka to Funan, which is identified as Vietnam. Such references bear witness to the close links that prevailed at the time along with the interchange of Buddhist monks among the Buddhist countries.

901-1000 Years after Parinibbana (357-456 CE)

This was the beginning of a golden period of Buddhism in Asia. It spread far and wide after Buddhism became the state religion of China after the accession of the rulers of the Wei Dynasty. The rulers of this dynasty were great patrons of Buddhism and were responsible for all the works of Buddhist art in China. Chinese monks were not satisfied to know of Buddhism only through missionary monks. They trekked to Indian seats of learning via Central Asia and studied directly under the Buddhist scholars of the period.

In India ruled the greatest of the Gupta rulers, Samudra Gupta (320-375) and Chandra Gupta II Vikramaditya (375-413). Their eclectic policies helped a great resurgence of Indian culture. Both Buddhism and Hinduism flourished side by side. The most celebrated Chinese pilgrim, Faxian came to India during the reign of Chandragupta II. According to his records there were monasteries belonging to both Hinayana and Mahayana traditions in Central Asia. For example, in the country of Shan Shan (south of Lop Nor) there were 4,000 monks of the Hinayana tradition, and in Kara-shahr there were over 4,000 monks of the Hinayana tradition. In Khotan, according to Fa-Hien there were tens of thousands of mainly Mahayana monks. He spent his time in Gomati vihara under the patronage of the Khotanese rulers. He also gave an account of the prosperous condition of Buddhism in Kashgar, which he passed before entering India.

From an historical point of view these records are extremely valuable as they were eye-witness accounts and corroborate the many archaeological finds of the period. Fa-Hien wrote a glowing account of the flourishing condition of Buddhism in India especially in Uddiyana, Gandhara, Mathura, Kanauj, Kosala, Magadha and Tamaralipti. From Tamaralipti he sailed to Sri Lanka, where Sri Meghavanna Abhaya ruled.

Kasmira, which first received Buddhist missionaries in the time of Asoka, was a renowned centre of Buddhist learning. One of the eminent scholars of the century, Kumarajiva (344-413), underwent his learning there. He gained such fame as a Buddhist scholar that many Buddhists from Khotan, Kashgar, Yarkhand, and other parts of East Turkestan visited him and even a Chinese expeditionary force was sent to take him to China. Kumarajiva heralded a new epoch in the spread of Buddhism in China. He is considered as the first teacher of the Madhyamika School in China and his command of both Sanskrit and Chinese was made full use of in the translation of many Buddhist works into Chinese. For this purpose he established under royal patronage a translation bureau with more than 800 monks.

South India gave birth to the greatest Buddhist logician, Dinnaga. According to Tibetan sources he was born near Kanchi. Though at first a Theravadin, he later became a follower of the Madhyamika School. He is credited with over 100 treatises on Buddhist logic. Other Buddhist scholars of repute were Buddhapalita and Bhavaviveka, both followers of the Madhyamika school.

Sri Lanka by now had become the champion of the pure Theravada tradition brought by the Ven. Maha Mahinda during the time of Emperor Asoka. Mahavihara in Anuradhapura was the centre of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. From time to time protagonists of the different sects came to Anuradhapura. Some received royal patronage, which led to bitter controversies between the Mahavihara and the Abhayagiri vihara. The latter became traditionally the home of dissentient sects referred to as "heretics" - *Vetulla* (Pali) or *vaitulya* (Sanskrit). The Abhayagiri vihara received support during the time of King Mahasena (334-362).

Mahasena's successor was King Sri Meghavanna (352-379), who restored the Mahavihara to its previous glory. His greatest contribution was the building of a vihara in Buddha Gaya for Sri Lankan monks with permission from King Samudra Gupta. It acted as an outpost of Theravada Buddhism in India at a time when Pali Buddhism had lost much of its popularity in India. The Gupta kings, too, were great patrons of Sanskrit. Many of the Buddhist scholars had accepted Sanskrit as the medium of expression. The gradual dethroning of Pali as the linguistic vehicle of Buddhism helped in the final absorption of Buddhism by Hinduism. In this context, Buddha Gaya under Sri Lankan monks, firm in their allegiance to Pali, was a haven for those who were desirous of learning the pure Buddha-word. The most significant reward was the conversion of Ghosa, later known throughout the Buddhist world as Buddha Ghosa, who translated the *Sihala-atthakathas* (commentaries in Sinhala) into Pali.

Sri Lankan monks also left Indian shores for missionary work. One such was the Ven. Gunabhadra, who had arrived in Indrapuri (Hue in Vietnam) from China in 435. He had already translated into Chinese the Samyutta Nikaya of the Pali Tipitaka.

Vietnam received other Buddhist monks from China prior to this. In 420, the Ven. Sanghavarma, who had translated the books of Vinaya to Sanskrit, was undertaking missionary work. The arrival in 431 of the Kashmiri monk, the Ven. Gunavarman, is recorded in Chinese annals. He had studied Theravada Buddhism for several years in Sri Lanka and had spent a long period in Vietnam before proceeding to China.

During this century Buddhism was transmitted to Korea, which is one of the important Buddhist countries in the Far East. Korea comprised of three different states, namely Koguryu, Pakche and Silla. In 372, Buddhism was introduced to Koguryu in the north by a Chinese monk. Twelve years later, in 384, a Central Asian monk brought Buddhism to Pakche in the south-west. It reached Silla in the south-east in 402. With Buddhism as the state religion in China, its spread to neighbouring countries was not difficult. It was readily accepted by the ruling dynasties and was given patronage for its growth.

The clarion call of the Buddha nearly 1,000 years ago for Buddhist monks to go forth for the good of the many was a chief motivating force. In 409, a Chinese monk, Hui-Shen, undertook his first trip to the Americas in order to spread the Dhamma. He went by boat and reached Mexico with five monks from Kabul. This is supported by the records in the archives of the Liang Dynasty handed down by the famous Chinese historian Ma-Tuan-Ling.

There was some activity in Java too, although Faxian, who visited Java in 413, states that there were so few Buddhists in Yavadvipa that they were not worth mentioning. There are later records that state that the Kashmir monk, the Ven. Gunavarman, spent some time in Cho-po (Java) and established the Teachings of the Lotus there before proceeding to Vietnam and China.

1001-1100 Years after Parinibbana (457-556 CE)

Nalanda, traditionally linked with the Buddha and Emperor Asoka, grew in importance as a seat of Buddhist learning only during this period. Inscriptions, seals and other remains along with the references made to it in the literary records all prove that it was in a flourishing state from the 5th to the 12th centuries. Detailed accounts are given by Xuan Zang, Yi Jing and other Chinese monks who travelled to India in search of books and knowledge. According to Yuan-Chwang there were over 1,500 teachers and the resident students numbered over 10,000. The impact this Buddhist university had on the spread of Buddhism during the next 500 years is immeasurable due to the influence of such renowned and versatile teachers as Acarya Silabhadra, Santaraksita and Atisa or Dipankara.

In the south, Kanchipuram or Conjeevaram, which later became the capital of the Pallava Dynasty, grew as a great centre of Hinayana. It was the home of Dharmapala, the great commentator and contemporary of Buddhaghosa. Near Kanchipuram was the famous sea-port of Mamallapuram where there is evidence to show that Buddhist monks left for Burma, Java, the Far East and China.

An important event in the history of Buddhism was the arrival of the great Pali commentator Buddhaghosa to Sri Lanka in the time of King Mahanama (458-480). He had to prove his worth by compiling the Visuddhi magga before the Mahavihara monks gave the Sinhala commentaries to him to be translated into Pali. This episode showed the responsibility with which the Mahavihara monks acted as the guardian of the word of the Buddha in its pristine form. Although the Sinhala commentaries went out of vogue, because of the Pali translations the original traditions are preserved to this date. In addition, the Pali tradition came into vogue among the Buddhist scholars of the time. According to the Cambodian tradition, Buddhaghosa spent his last days in Cambodia, where an ancient vihara known as Buddhaghosa vihara is extant.

China, too, was attracting greater attention from Buddhist scholars. The Ven. Bodhidharma, a South Indian monk from Kanchipura, left for China in 526. He was known as a great meditation master and in China he stressed the importance of meditation. The Ven. Bodhidharma influenced the moulding of Ch'an Buddhism from which Japanese Zen Buddhism was derived. He arrived in China in the first year of the reign of Emperor Wu Di 502-549 of the Liang Dynasty (528). There are many interesting legends connected with Ven. Bodhidharma. His towering personality has made an indelible mark on the Buddhists not only of China, but also of Korea, Japan and Vietnam. In 470, the Ven. Bodhidharma is said to have introduced Ch'an Buddhism to Vietnam.

Another Buddhist monk of repute was the Ven. Paramartha (Po-lo-mo-tho) who lived from 513-569. He was from Ujjeni, now a renowned centre of Sanskrit Buddhism. On a request made by the Chinese Emperor he was sent from Ujjeni and took with him many Buddhist texts translated into Chinese. He arrived in Nanking by sea in 548. The Ven. Paramartha established the She-lun-tsung (Mahayana-samparigraha Sastra-school) in China. The Ven. Paramartha, Yuan Chwang and Ven. Bodhiruci were the three main exponents of the Yogacara or Vijnanavada School and translated many Sanskrit texts into Chinese.

During this period many Chinese monks left singly or in groups as pilgrims to India in search of Buddhist texts and teachings, whilst hundreds of foreign monks from Central Asia, northern and southern India and Sri Lanka, came to China to expound the teachings. By the time of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-565), Chinese records show that there were over 30,000 monasteries and over two million Buddhist disciples in that region.

The chief significance of Korean Buddhism, according to some, was the role it played as an intermediary between China and Japan. In 538 (another tradition holds 552) Buddhism was officially introduced to Japan from Packche (Kudara), one of the kingdoms of Korea, by the sending of Buddha images. This event could be considered as a natural flow of Chinese culture to foreign lands. Japanese Buddhists read the sutras in Chinese and come to comprehend Buddhism through the Chinese translations. However, as in all countries where Buddhism spread, in Japan too it had a great humanizing influence and helped in a cultural efflorescence.

There is historical evidence that Buddhism had spread to parts of present Soviet Russia during this century. North of Bairam Ali, in Turkmania, archaeologists have found Buddhist shrines and a clay vessel containing statuettes of the Buddha, Persian coins of the Sassanoids relating to the fifth century, and a pile of pressed palm leaves. The latter contains sections of the Vinaya written in Brahmi characters dating to this period. Because of the existence of Persian coins it can be surmised that Buddhism spread along the Aral from Persia to these areas.

In South-East Asia and the Far Eastern region, too, there is evidence of much Buddhist activity. Buddhist archaeological finds have been discovered in the main trading outposts along the traditional sea route to China as far as Borneo. Besides the statuettes, the most striking link are clay seals with the famous verse of the Ven. Assaji to the Ven. Sariputta (*Ye dharma hetupprabhava . . .*) in Sanskrit. Whether this was used by sea-faring Buddhist traders as a talisman for protection is not known, but by its extensive incidence the conclusion may be drawn that Buddhism had become a popular religion.

A large number of inscriptions were found in different parts of the Malay Peninsula, dating from the fourth and fifth centuries, that are all in Sanskrit and in the Indian alphabet. The general belief is that Indian traders, both Hindu and Buddhist, established small communities along the sea routes and these became centres for the spread of both Buddhism and Hinduism and their respective cultures to the indigenous populations. The Liang annals record the acceptance of Buddhism by the king of Kan-to-li (in the Malay Peninsula) at the beginning of the sixth century. These were the beginnings of the great Buddhist kingdom of Sri Vijaya, which flourished during the subsequent centuries.

In mainland Burma, records indicate the existence of a prosperous state of Theravada Buddhism. There are remains of archaeological interest in modern Hmawza, near Prome, where the capital of the old kingdom of Pyus, known as Sri Ksetra, was located. Alongside there are the findings of Mula-Sarvastivada and Mahayanism, which indicate that all Buddhist sects were engaged in spreading the teaching of the Buddha.

In Vietnam there is a record of a Sri Lankan monk, the Ven. Sangabhadra, arriving in Tonking in 488 and engaging in Buddhist missionary work before proceeding to China.

1101-1200 Years after Parinibbana (557-656 CE)

Buddhism reached further outposts, notably Nepal and Tibet, during this century. However, in India the opposition to Buddhism was gaining in momentum with the resurgence of Hinduism and Hindu culture under the Gupta rulers. The invasion of the Huns brought much destruction to the peaceful Buddhist states in Central Asia. The glorious period after the first thousand years of Buddhism after parinibbana was gradually fading. During the next thousand years saw the final flickering of Buddhism in India. But the golden era of Buddhism outside India and Central Asia was yet to come.

Another important event was the birth of Islam under Prophet Mohammad. Its push in all directions had devastating effects on the established religions and cultures of the world. A peaceful religion like Buddhism could not withstand the Muslim onslaught and gradually receded.

The most lucid description of the status of Buddhism during this period is in the travel accounts of the great scholar and pilgrim monk Xuan Zang (602-664). He started his journey in 629 and returned in 645. Under the patronage of the T'ang Dynasty (618-906), Xuan Zang became one of the most notable scholars in China. He translated seventy-five treatises into Chinese in 1,335 fascicules. They included texts from the Mahayana (416) Theravada (fourteen), Sammitiyas (fifteen), Mahisasakas (twenty-two), Kasyapiyas (seventeen), Dharmaguptas (forty-two), Sarvastivada (sixty-seven), Mahasanghikas (eighteen), Hetusastra (thirty-six), and Sabdasastra (thirteen). He became the founder of the Dharmalaksana School, based on the Vijnanavada texts and commentaries. In China at the time there were 3,716 monasteries, which testify to the flourishing nature of Buddhism.

Among the Central Asian kingdoms, Xuan Zang speaks of a Buddhist population that lived in Turfan. In Kara-shahr there were ten monasteries and 2,000 monks of the Hinayana sect. In Kucha, there were 5,000 monks to whom King Suvarnadeva was giving protection. The chief monk was the Ven. Moksa-gupta of the Hinayana sect. At Issiq Kul, Yuan-Chwang persuaded the ruler who had established control up to Gandhara accept Buddhism. In Samarkand, which was the terminus of the caravan routes between India and China, Buddhism was experiencing difficulties with Zoroastrianism. In Balkh and Bactria there were many monasteries belonging to the Hinayana School. Crossing the Hindu Kush, Yuan-Chwang refers to the two colossal Buddha statues at Bamiyan that are 170 and 115 feet high. There were ten Buddhist monasteries with several thousand monks. At Kapisa (present Bigram) the king was a devout Buddhist belonging to the Mahayana tradition. But Yuan-Chwang stayed in a monastery of the Hinayana sect to please his travelling companion, the Ven. Prajnakara, who had joined him at Balkh.

The destruction that had been brought about by the Hun invaders was most extensive. In Lampaka, once a flourishing Greco-Buddhist country west of Jalalabad, there were only ruins of monasteries and vestiges of works of art. In the Gandhara region Yuan-Chwang saw "a million" Buddhist monasteries in ruin and deserted. "They are overgrown with weeds and they make a mournful solitude". It was the same story at Udyana which once had 1,400 viharas and 18,000 monks, but was destroyed by the Hun invaders. Taksasila, the seat of ancient learning and the beacon in the spread of Buddhism to the Greek world, was no more. However in Kashmir, Buddhism prevailed. There, Xuan Zang saw over 100 monasteries with 5,000 monks. Travelling further east he reached the Upper Ganges and observed the growing triumph of Hinduism and the relative decline of Buddhism.

Xuan Zang's descriptions are extremely vivid and show that in Central Asia both Hinayana and Mahayana traditions were strong. The Hinayana was mainly the Mula-Sarvastivada and not the Theravada Pali tradition, which lost its hold between the third and the fourth councils. In the north-west border areas, from Hindu Kush to Kashmir, Buddhist communities had been annihilated. The physical destruction of the monasteries, stupas and anything Buddhist was so vast that Buddhism was not unable to be revived. The Hun invasions were followed by those of the Arabs and the Turks, who, fired by their religious fervour, brought the final destruction of Buddhism in those regions. The life-line to China through Kabul and Central Asia, linking Buddhists of India and China for centuries, was thus completely obliterated.

Harsadeva of Kanauj (606-647), who was the last of the great Buddhist rulers in India, reigned in Central India when Xuan Zang arrived. His father, Maharajadhiraja Prabhakara Vardhana, was a Sun worshipper. However, his elder brother and sister were devout Buddhists. He himself became a Buddhist and followed a very eclectic religious policy. His greatest contribution was regarding the growth of the Nalanda University, which replaced Taksasila as the seat of learning. The ascetic life he led and the devotion he had for Buddhism was recorded by Xuan Zang, who over fourteen years, (630-644), received the support of Harsadeva.

At Valabhi, twenty-two miles north-west of Bhavanagar, a Buddhist community had developed under the patronage of the Maitraka Dynasty of Valabhi. According to the travel accounts of Yuan-Chwang, when he visited Valabhi, it had 100 monasteries with 6,000 monks belonging to the Sammitiya School. Valabhi grew in importance and became a centre of Buddhist learning, next only to Nalanda. From literary records and the archaeological finds discovered in Valabhi, it is probable that there was a strong Buddhist community up to the tenth century. It had given birth to renowned Buddhist scholars such as Sthiramati and Gunamati.

Southern Nepal had been a Buddhist country from the time of the Buddha. This century saw the accession of King Amsuvarman, a powerful ruler and a strong supporter and propagator of Buddhism. Some consider that his reign ushered in the golden era of Buddhism in Nepal.

King Sroni-btsan-gan-po of Tibet, a contemporary of King Harsadeva, was one of the most gifted rulers Tibet has produced. This was recognized by the rulers of Nepal and China that bordered Tibet. Indeed King Amsuyarman of Nepal and T'ait Sung of China gave their daughters in marriage to King Sroni-btsan-gan-po - Bhrukuti and Wen-ch'eng respectively. These princesses brought with them the images of Aksobya, Maitreya and Sakyamuni as gifts from their own countries and in this manner introduced Buddhism officially to Tibet around 611. The richness of Buddhism spurred the king to conceive the idea of developing a Tibetan script to facilitate the transliteration of Buddhist texts into Tibetan. The subsequent growth of Tibetan Buddhism was mainly due to the far-sighted vision of King Sroni-btsan-gan-po. The famous temples of Ramoche and Jokhang in Lhasa are attributed to him. Even in his administration he was deeply influenced by Buddhist principles and when promulgating laws he tried to harmonize them with Buddhism. In this manner he ushered in a new era in Tibet.

Beyond China, Mongolia was already a Buddhist country. In Korea, Buddhism had been introduced in the previous century and had spreadi under the influence of the Silla Dynasty. Several famous scholar-monks went to China to study further the Buddhist doctrines. Of them, Yuan-Ts'o (613-683) of the Fa-Hsian sect, and Yuan Hiao (617-670) and Yi-Siang (625-702) of the Houa-Yen sect are noteworthy. This indicates the leadership taken by China and its acceptance by neighbouring countries. In Japan, Prince Shotoku Taishi (574-621), belonging to the Asuka period, became one of the greatest benefactors of Buddhism. It is said that his contribution in Japan is comparable to that of King Asoka of India. The famous Horyuji monastery in Nara was founded by him in 607.

120I-1300 Years after Parinibbana (657-756 CE)

The old world was breaking up. The Central Asian route was becoming more and more hazardous after the weakening of the T'ang Empire and after the rise of Tibet as an independent country. The Islamic Arabs were also making their presence felt. After Harsa there was no ruler that could unify North India and the region broke up into many kingdoms. There was a state of virtual anarchy in India and the conditions did not favour a monastic religion like Buddhism, which had to depend on the patronage of rulers. However, relationships continued between Buddhist China and the rest of the Buddhist world mainly due to the use of maritime routes. There is evidence to suggest that there was a continuous exchange of ideas, books and works of art, mainly statues of Buddha, between India, Sri Lanka, Java, Cambodia, Campa and the ports of the Canton region of China. Buddhist activity was pushed into the eastern region of India, mainly Bengal around the University of Nalanda.

One invaluable source with which to study the status of Buddhism is the record of another famous Chinese pilgrim monk Yi Jing, who travelled from 671-695. Kanchipuram in South India and Mahavihara in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, were great centres of Theravada tradition and for centuries had influenced the Buddhist destiny of the Malayan Archipelago. According to I'Tsing, Hinayana Buddhism had spread widely in the region, though Malayu (Sri Vijaya) was an exception and followed Mahayana.

The most important event of the century from the Buddhist viewpoint was the rise of the Buddhist kingdom of Sri Vijaya, which brought the whole of the Malayan archipelago under one ruler who commanded the maritime routes to the Far East. Differing views are expressed regarding the identification of the original Sri Vijaya. Yi Jing writes that in the fortified city of Fo-che (Vijaya) Buddhist monks numbered more than 1,000 and it was developed as a centre of Buddhist learning. Based on these records and an inscription at Kedukan Bukit, which gives an interesting detail regarding one of the Sri Vijayan rulers, the general opinion is that after Malayu was captured in 683, the centre of activity of the Sri Vijaya kingdom shifted to Palembang in Java.

Between Yi Jing's first visit to Sri Vijaya and the subsequent visit on his return trip, many changes seem to have taken place, the most important of which was the ascendency of Mahayana Buddhism. This is also attested to by the Talang Tuwo inscription (684) of King Jayanasa, which contains the expressions Vajra-kaya, Kaya-vak-citta-Vajrasadhana that definitely bear a Tantric character. The conclusion is that the leadership was at this time shifting from Sri Lanka and South India to the Nalanda University. Some express the view that this may be due to the influence of the Ven. Dharmapala of Kanchi who spent twenty years in Nalanda and then proceeded to Suvarnadipa.

Learned monks continued to visit China from India and the Western regions. Most renowned was the Ven. Bodhiruci, a South Indian monk considered one of the greatest translators of Buddhist texts at the time. (From 693 to 713, according to records, he translated over fifty-three texts.) Generally, the T'ang Dynasty is considered the golden age of Buddhism in China. It was followed, however, by a period of persecution. Wu Zang, influenced by Confucianism, denounced Buddhism as pernicious to the country and ordered 12,000 monks and nuns to return to the life of lay people. During the time of Queen Wen there was a ban on the writing of sacred books and the building of temples. Such actions epitomized the opposition to Buddhism from indigenous religions.

The progress of Buddhism in Japan was slow but steady, being influenced mostly by China. In 673 the entire Buddhist Canon was copied into Japanese. Politically the most important event was the selection of Nara as the new capital. After the establishment of the Horaiji temple, Nara had gained pre-eminence in Japan as the centre of Buddhism. With the shifting of the capital to Nara the patronage of Buddhism by the Japanese aristocracy increased. Thus it gained an edge over Shintoism and in turn helped the popular spread of Buddhism. There were frequent visits of monks from the Buddhist world. In 736, for example, visits are recorded of an Indian monk named Bodhisena, a Vietnamese monk Fu-cheh (Buttetsu), who accompanied the Ven. Bodhisena from Rinyu (Champa), and a T'ang monk Tao Hsuan. In 752 the dedication of the great Buddha statue of Todaiji temple took place.

1301-1400 Years after Parinibbana (757-856 CE)

The Buddhist torch that set ablaze a rich cultural heritage in Central Asia had been extinguished. After the decline of Kucha, Buddhism was patronized by the Uigur Turks who had their capital in the Turfan region bordering China.

China remained a Buddhist country and, according to records, by 845 there were over 40,000 monasteries and temples and more than 260,000 monks and nuns. The patronage given by successive rulers of the T'ang Dynasty led to this fortunate situation. China was the greatest influencing factor concerning Japanese Buddhism.

In Japan, Nara lost its importance and Heian (Kyoto) was made the capital in 794: it remained so until 1192. During this century certain important developments took place. In 805 the Tendai School was begun on the return of the Ven. Saicho (767-822) from China. It was the first sect to be established as a religious body in Japan. A year later, in 806, the Shingon School was started by the Ven. Kukai (774-835), again on his return from China. In 822, permission was granted to establish the ordination platform of Mahayana precepts on Mount Hiei, Hitherto it had been in Nara and this was the climax of a dispute the Ven. Saicho had had and the acceptance of his complete independence. Thus the two great sects, which were very powerful during the whole of the Heian period, were established.

In Tibet, events led to Buddhism being finally accepted as the state religion. Although Buddhism was officially introduced to Tibet a century earlier under very favourable patronage, before it could take root it had to face stiff opposition from the protagonists of the indigenous Bon beliefs. Disregarding the opposition of the Phon officials, King Khri-sron-Ide-btsan (755-797), the fifth successor of King Sron-btsan, invited Santaraksita of the Nalanda University to spread Buddhism among the people. However, the opposition was so great that the Ven. Santaraksita had to return to Nalanda and the Ven. Padmasambhava, the great apostle of Tantrism, replaced him. Accredited to King Khri-Sron-Ide-btsan was the establishment of the great Tibetan monastery at Bsam-yas on the model of Udayantapuri in Bihar, the preparation of the first catalogue of the translated Buddhist works in the Ldandkar palace, and the translation activity of the Ven. Santaraksita on his return. For a debate with the Chinese monks, King Khri-Sron-Ide-btsan invited Kamalasila, a disciple of Santaraksita. In the debate which was conducted in the king's presence, Kamalasila was declared the winner. In this manner the king brought about a cultural split from China to crown the political independence he won by his defeat of the Chinese armies. The latter is recorded in a pillar inscription in front of the Pota-la. In the growth of Tibetan Buddhism, the inspiration came entirely from the scholastic beliefs that prevailed in the University of Nalanda. Before his death King Khri-Sron-Ide-btsan gave Buddhism the supreme position by making it the state religion.

He was succeeded by two other rulers who gave fresh impetus to the consolidation of Buddhism in Tibet. Under the patronage of King Khri-Ide-sron-btsan, a Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary called *Mahavyutpatti* was prepared and published in 814. This facilitated the process of translating Sanskrit books into Tibetan. The successor to King Sron-btsan, Ral-pa Chen (816-838), was a great benefactor of Buddhism. Some refer to his reign as the golden period of the religion in Tibet. A council was held with the purpose of purifying the Buddhism that came to Tibet, and simplifying and rendering it intelligible to the people, for King Ral-pa Chen took a personal interest in propagating Buddhism. During his period Jinamitra, a Kashmiri scholar of the Vaibhasika School, translated many Vinaya sutra texts to Tibetan. The Tantric Buddhism introduced by Padmasambhava appealed to the Tibetans, who prior to the introduction of Buddhism were followers of Bonpo, an animistic religion that included many elements of sexual mysticism. During this period, very strong cultural and religious links were developed with Nepal partly due to political expediency, but mostly due to Nepal being on the main route between Bengal and Tibet, via Kyirong. The development of Buddhism in Nepal was influenced both by Nalanda and Tibet.

The University of Nalanda rose to pre-eminence during this century and this state of affairs continued until the end of the Pala Dynasty, which lasted four centuries. The Pala rulers, who were zealous Buddhists, were responsible for the great revival of Buddhism experienced during this time. They made several endowments to the Nalanda University and also founded Vikramasila, Odantapuri and Somapuri, which also gained fame as centres of Buddhist learning. The Pala Dynasty influence was seen not only in Tibet but throughout the South-East Asia region, as evidenced in the Buddhist art of the period.

Except in eastern India, which was under Pala rule, Buddhism was slowly disappearing from India. Yet there were Buddhist communities centred round monasteries which had gained fame in earlier times. A literary work of the period, Kundalakesi, written in South India by a person called Nathagupta, is an adaptation of a story from the Therigatha and written in Tamil.

The Sri Vijaya Empire was at the height of its power. An inscription at Ligor (775) refers to the further progress of the expansionist policy of Sri Vijaya. It contains ten verses written in Sanskrit which confirms that Sanskrit was the language of the literati or even the state language. Buddhism of the Mula-sarvastivadins seems to have been overwhelmed by Mahayana Tantric Buddhism. The royal patronage of this form of Buddhism, mainly due to the influences of Nalanda University, is confirmed by references in the Kalasan inscription (778) and Kelurak inscription (782). In verse fourteen of the Kelurak inscription it is stated that Manjusri is also Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesvara, "in fact, all gods in one". This is an interesting development which resulted in the absorption of Buddhism by the Hindu community by making the Buddha an avatar of Vishnu. The inscription also demonstrates the presence of Buddhist monks from Bengal.

Buddhism reached its peak in Java under the Sailendra kings of the Sri Vijaya kingdom (the Sailendra period probably extended from 750-800). These kings began a remarkable epoch of Buddhist architecture in Central Java, the most notable achievement being the famous Buddhist temple at Borobudur. There was much Buddhist activity under their patronage and as the kingdom was very extensive Buddhism spread to all the neighbouring islands. Both Buddhism and Hinduism existed side by side and were the great civilizing forces which gave the inhabitants of these islands a rich culture and philosophy. The island of Bali was completely brought under the influence of Buddhism.

The close links the Sailendra kings had with Pala rulers is testified by the Nalanda copper plates (850) of Devapaladeva which record the gift of five villages to a vihara founded at Nalanda by King Balaputradeva, who is referred to as Suvarnadvipadidipa Maharaja. This reference to Suvarnadvipa has led to some scholars identifying Suvarnabhumi, to which Buddhist monks were sent during the time of Asoka, with these regions.

Burma, Siam, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam were all part of the Buddhist world. Both the Mahayana and Hinayana traditions were present. The influence of Nalanda University eclipsed every other. This is seen even in the history of Buddhism of the late Anuradhapura period in Sri Lanka, the home of the Theravada tradition. Such Tantric Buddhist texts as Ratanakuta were brought with honour even to Sri Lanka.

An important inscription which sheds light on Buddhism in Burma is that engraved in a pillar found in Arakan. It refers to a dynasty known as Dharmarajanuja vamsa that held sway between 600-1000 and whose rulers were great patrons of Buddhism. The many Buddhist archaeological remains that have been discovered indicate that Buddhism was firmly established in the Arakan area by this time.

1401-1500 Years after Parinibbana (857-956 CE)

Even doctrinally Buddhism was falling apart. There were still followers of the original teachings of the Buddha but there were, in comparison, an overwhelmingly large number of unorthodox sects. The influence of tantricism due to the influence of the Nalanda University was becoming widespread. It popularized Buddhism but also sapped the inner strength of early Buddhism. Hence it could not withstand both the doctrinal onslaughts of Hinduism after Sankaracarya and the physical onslaughts of the marauding Muslims.

The copperplate inscription of the Rastrakuta King Dantavarman of Gujarat of the Saka era (189-861) records that the king at the request of the monk Sthiramati, donated lands to the Kampilya vihara in Gujarat where 400 monks of the Sindhudesa lived. Another inscription of the Rastrakuta king Dharavarsa records a similar grant to the same monastery (884). It may be inferred that the Buddhist community in the Sindhu delta had migrated southwards for fear of the Muslims and founded a vihara at Kampilya.

Another notable record is the inscription of Vikramaditya Varaguna (circa 868) of the Pandya Dynasty in South India, which has references such as "May the moonlike radiance of the Buddha grant prosperity to us, his worshippers", and "May the Dharma and the Sangha be for a long time like two eyes to Goddess Earth". They have a strong Hinayana complexion and could be due to the influence of Sri Lanka. It is noteworthy that the Pandyan King Varagunavarman II (862-880) referred to in the inscription was installed as king by a Sri Lankan commander.

The Sri Vijayan kingdom still held sway and its rulers, due to their close connections with the Pala rulers, were patrons of Mahayana Buddhism. Burma too was becoming inclined towards Mahayana. In Hmwaza a terracotta tablet representing an image of Tara has been found and this, along with numerous tablets of the period, all bear testimony to the influence of later forms of Buddhism.

In China, following the T'ang period, there was a period of political disunity and confusion (906-960) and Buddhism suffered considerably until the Sung dynasty twas established in 960.

In the early period of Japanese Buddhism there were close links between Buddhist sects in China and Japan. But Buddhism in Japan took its own path. In the importation of Chinese Buddhism into Japan the chief barrier were the linguistic limitations exerted on the understanding of thought. Japanese monks also were aware that the original teachings of the Buddha were from India. However, like the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim monks of the T'ang period there were no such monks from Japan that went to the West in quest of pristine Dhamma.

There was much interaction with indigenous Shintoism that emphasized ancestral worship. Probably because of this influence Japanese Buddhism "degenerated to the point where the dead person was called Hotoek (Buddha) and they prayed to Buddha for the happiness of the dead by Sutra recitation or the Nembutsu". The basic goal in Buddhism of gaining perfection was changed to rites for the sake of dead spirits. For seventy years, Kuva, the Saint of the Market, spent his time teaching the Nembutsu to the people (938). As in India, with this substandard popularisation the fundamental character of Buddhism was lost.

The century was one of decadence and degeneration although, as a religion, Buddhism continued to be the most powerful force in Asia.

1501-1600 Years after Parinibbana (957-1056 CE)

Once again there was a resurgence of Buddhism, but it was mainly outside India. However, Vikramasila monastery produced a great scholar-monk, Acarya Dipankara Srijnana, or Atisa (Dpal-marmed-mdsa-Ye-Ses, or Jo-vor-je Pal-Dan-Atisa) (982-1054). He was the second son of Kalyanasri, a patron of the monastery. He became a samanera at the age of twelve. He first studied at Vikramasila, then at Nalanda and Rajagaha, and finally back at Vikramasila under Naropa in charge of the Northern Gate. From there he left to Buddha Gaya to study under Maha Vinayadhara Silaraksita and then travelled to Burma (Myanmar) and Malayu to study under Acarya Dharmapala of Suvarnadvipa. At thirty-one, he was a master of the Tipitaka, the Tantras and an all-round scholar. At forty-four he left Sumatra and returned to Vikramasila where he became the chief of fifty-one scholars and leader of 108 monasteries. His fame spread in the Buddhist world and when he received messengers from Tibet sent by the royal ascetic Jnanaprabha, he resolved to go to Tibet (aged fifty-seven). In the biographical account of the Ven. Atisa, it is said that at the time "the master left India, Buddhism was, as it were, at its lowest ebb".

Atisa brought the last spiritual impulsion from India. During this period, under the patronage of the kings of western Tibet, Buddhism began to flourish as an indigenous mode of religious and philosophical thought. Atisa's teachings were based on the Yogacara school of Maitreya and Asanga, and this led to the establishment of the Bkah-gdams-pa school by his Tibetan disciple, Hbrom-ston. There was a synthesis of both Hinayana and Mahayana, and the new school enforced celibacy upon the monks and discouraged magic practices. It was as if Atisa took the light of Buddhism from India to Tibet with the vision of the future debacle of Buddhism in India, its birthplace. Atisa's account shows the zeal with which Buddhist missionary monks worked, though it was 1,500 years after the parinibbana. His life was one of scholarship, devotion, humility, resolution and detachment; his impact due to these qualities.

The spiritualism of Tibetans was kindled. An important development was the Kagudpa school of Yoga, as expanded by the four famous saints Tilopa (975), Naropa, Marpa and Milarepa (1052-1135). The last was the most renowned and his utterances have now been translated into English from Tibetan by Prof. CC Chang and published as the "Hundred Songs of Milarepa". These could only emanate from a mind inspired and illumined with knowledge of liberation (*vimutti*). In 1050, a religious council was held in Tibet and there was a great Buddhist revival associated with Atisa, Marpa, and Milarepa.

In Nepal, Buddhism was still the state religion. When the Ven. Atisa was passing through Nepal, King Jayakamadeva of the Thakuri Dynasty was on the throne. Atisa spent two years in Nepal on the king's invitation. He was able to tutor a prince of royal blood into the order. From Nepal and Tibet, Buddhism spread to the neighbouring kingdoms of Bhutan, Sikkim and Ladakh, which to this day remain Buddhist states.

Political stability was once again brought to China under the Northern Sung (960-112) and the Southern Sung (1121-1279) Dynasties, established by Chao-kuang-yin, a Buddhist disciple, who reigned as Emperor Tai Tsu. There was an efflorescence of art and architecture during this period, the culmination of the intellectual and spiritual activity from the latter part of the T'ang Dynasty and the five dynasties that followed. Both Ch'an Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism were outcomes of these developments.

In Japan there were eight sects by this time. The first, the Sanron Sect, was introduced circa 729 by Hui-kuan of Koguryu. Along with the Sanron, the Hosso, Kusha, Jojitsu, Kegon and Ritsu sects are known as the six sects of Nara. To this were added the Tendai and Shingon sects of the Heian period to make the eight sects.

An event of great significance which became a turning point in the history of Burma was the ascendancy of King Anawrata (Anuruddha in 1044) to the throne of Pagan. He raised this small principality into an extensive kingdom that included the greater part of modern Burma, and for the first time brought about a political union of the country. More important was the complete transformation of Burmese culture under the influence of the Mons. King Anawrata became a follower of Theravada Buddhism after listening to a Talaing monk of Thaton named Arhan, also known as Dharmadarsi. With enthusiasm, he sent messengers to the king of Thaton requesting him to send a complete set of the Tipitaka. As he refused, King Anawrata marched with his army and having captured the king of Thaton brought monks, Buddhist texts and relics on the back of thirty-two elephants.

South-East Asia was dominated by the Sailendra kings of the Sri Vijaya kingdom. They continued to be patrons of Buddhism, and Suvarnadvipa (Sumatra) flourished as a centre of Buddhist learning, especially for foreign monks to acquire a proficiency in Sanskrit before proceeding to India. The standard of scholarship should have been high for Atisa Dipankara decided to stay fourteen years in Suvarnadvipa to study under Acarya Dharmapala.

Circa 1005, a Chola inscription was created which stated that the Sailendra king, Chudamanivarman, had commenced the construction of a Buddhist vihara at Nagapatthana. In or shortly after the twenty-first year of the Chola king, Rajaraja (985-1016), a village was granted for its upkeep. But these friendly relations seem to have been short-lived. During the reign of King Rajadhiraja (985-1016) a naval expedition was sent against the Sailendra king and the Chola kingdom was extended to the whole of the eastern coastal region of Sumatra and the central and southern part of the Malay Peninsula. Sri Lanka was also brought under the domination of the Cholas from about 1044 to 1070.

According to Chinese annals, the Ly Dynasty came into power in the kingdom of Campa (Vietnam) in 1010. The early missionaries had contributed a great deal to the growth of Buddhism in Vietnam. However, it was during the Ly Dynasty, which ruled for 215 years, that Buddhism was declared a state religion.

1601-1700 Years after Parinibbana (1057-1156 CE)

In Central Asia, the glory that was the past, inspired by Buddhism, had already succumbed to Islamic influence and was becoming eclipsed, only to be discovered about a millennium later. Arab and Turkish Muslims were becoming a considerable force, threatening the Byzantine Empire in the West and India in the East. Under Mohammed of Ghazni, circa 1018, Muslim rule extended from the Indus to the Jumna. From then onwards it was only a matter of time until the whole of India was brought under *Mohammedan* rule by the Moghul rulers. In the south, the Chola kingdom reached its zenith under Rajadhiriija. All these developments were fatal for the course of Buddhism in India.

However, we see during this century a re-establishment of Theravada Buddhism in the South-East Asia region, which was an important development. The official introduction of Theravada Buddhism to the court of Pagan was in 1057. King Anawrata, who ruled until 1084, and his son King Kyanzittha (1084-1112), became eminent champions of the Theravada form of Buddhism and along with their political authority Buddhism spread over the whole of Burma. King Anawrata even arranged copies of the Tipitaka to be brought from Lanka and they were compared with the texts brought from Thaton. During this period more than 5,600 pagodas were erected in the capital Pagan. It was a period of great Buddhist resurgence. The king also had very close links with King Vijayabahu I of Sri Lanka. The latter drove the Cholas from Sri Lanka in 1070 and sent messages to King Anawrata to send Theravada Buddhist monks to re-establish the *sasana* after the total destruction brought about by the Tamil invasion. This was the commencement of a long tradition of close religious links between Burma and Sri Lanka, later extended to Siam, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

The hostility between the Cholas and the Sri Vijaya Sailendra kings had apparently ended as evinced by an inscription which records that in 1090 the Chola king, Kulottunga, exempted from taxes the village granted to the Buddhist monastery called Sailendra-Cudamanivarma vihara, at the request of the king of Kadara. This is the same vihara referred to in the copper plate inscription of King Rajaraja. It can be inferred that a Buddhist community lived near Nagapattanam in southern India. The power of the Sailendras dwindled and by the end of the century a great Buddhist domain that for over 500 years ruled the maritime areas of the Malay Archipelago, and supported the seat of Buddhist learning in Sumatra, faded into obscurity.

The Sailendra rulers being supporters of Mahayana Buddhism were chiefly instrumental in propagating Mahayana doctrines in the region. There existed in Cambodia from 1002 to 1182 the Suryavarman Dynasty, adherents of Mahayana Buddhism, whose empire extended over the whole of present day Thailand. Accordingly, it was Mahayana Buddhism that prevailed in Thailand at the time. In northern parts of Thailand, which were under Burmese rule, Theravada Buddhism was more prevalent due to the influence of King Anawrata and his successors.

In Tibet, immediately after the great revival of Buddhism under Atisa, Marpa and Milarepa, two other sects came into being. They were the Bkab-rgyud-pa, influenced by Marpa, and the Sa-skya-pa, which took Padmasambava as its founder and recognized by red caps. Inspired by their masters, Tibetan Buddhist monks were gradually entering China. The traditional route to India being closed and sea travel being hazardous, China was becoming more and more influenced by Tibet.

In Korea, Buddhism reached the height of its power during this century when Korea was ruled by the Wang Dynasty. Hitherto Buddhism had been the religion mostly of the aristocracy related to the Silla Dynasty, but due to the efforts of Korean monks led by Yi-T'ien and Pu Chao it became also the faith of the common man. Among the activities of Yi-T'ien was the editing of the catalogue of the Chinese Tipitaka called Yi-T'ien-Lu. He went to China to study Buddhism in depth and on his return propagated the doctrine of both the Houa Yen and T'ien T'ai sects. The introduction of Ch'ang or Zen Buddhism into Korea was the work of P'u Chao.

In Japan the most important doctrinal development was the teaching of the Nembutsu by Ryomin (1072-1132) and the beginning of the Yuzu Nembutsu School circa 1124.

1701-1800 Years after Parinibbana (1147-1256 CE)

In Sri Lanka there was a great revival of Buddhism under Parakramabahu I (1153-1186), who reunited the whole of Sri Lanka. The Polonnaruwa period had three great benefactors of Buddhism, Vijayabahu I (1055-1110), Parakramabahu I, and Nissanka Malla (1187-1196). Politically, Sri Lanka reached the zenith of her power during the reign of Parakramabahu, who sent maritime expeditions both to Burma and the Pandya country in southern India. The most important Buddhist event was the reunification of the Mahavihara, Abhayagiri and Jetavana sangha in 1165. This occurred after holding a council (sanghayana) for the purification of the sangha under the leadership of the Ven. Dimbulagala Kasyapa. Sri Lanka was gaining pre-eminence in the Buddhist world. The Pala rulers who patronized Buddhism in the North had lost political power and in the South, the Chola, Pandya and Pallava rulers were either Saivite or Vaisnavite and only tolerated Buddhism. In Sri Lanka, their policy had been the destruction Buddhism for political expediency. In this context the events in Sri Lanka were of special significance for the future of Buddhism.

Burma extended her influence especially over upper Thailand; but during the century, after a long period of struggle, the Thais were able to establish an independent state in Sukhothai. They later extended their territory to cover present-day Thailand. With the Burmese impact, Sumatra was already under Theravada influence, and with political expansion the Theravada tradition supplanted the Mahayana in the region. This was unproblematic as the Sri Vijaya Kingdom was already breaking up and the religious leadership of the Nalanda University was fading.

The most notable event that demonstrated the re-emergence of Sri Lanka in the Buddhist world was the establishment of a Sihala (Sinhala) order in Burma by a monk called Capata, who had received his higher ordination in Sri Lanka. The Sihala monks did not consider their counterparts in Burma as validly ordained, a belief shared by Capata and his disciples. The rivalry between the Sihala Sangha and the Mramma Sangha continued for three centuries and ended in the final triumph of the former.

In the political arena the most important occurrence was the Mongol invasions, which resulted in the emergence of an empire that extended from the southern tip of Korea to the shores of the Caspian Sea. In 1206 their leader, Timurjin, took the title Genghis Khan, the "Emperor of the Seas". The Mongols were Buddhists and the cultural links between China, Tibet, Korea and Mongolia that prevailed from about the sixth century were reinforced.

In Japan the Kamakura period, which followed the Heian period, started in 1192 with the beginning of the Kamakura Shogunate. This century saw the birth of four of the most important schools of Japanese Buddhism. In 1175, Honen (1133-1262) who studied the Nembutsu under Eiku, taught Senju-nembutsu which was the beginning of the Jodo school. In 1224, Shinran (1173-1262), commenced writing the Kyogyoshinsho, which was the beginning of the Jodo Shinshu School. This school has the largest number of adherents today. In 1227, Dogen (1200-1253), returned from Sung China and began the Soto Zen School, and in 1253, Nichiren (1222-1282), who was active in Kamakura, began the Nichiren School. .

The importance of the Kamakura period was the popularization of Buddhism among the common people and its complete absorption by Japan. The Zen schools emphasized meditation and salvation through one's own enlightenment, (*jiriki* or "self power") whilst the Jodo (Pure Land) schools believed in salvation through faith in the power of others, (*Tariki* or "other power"). Since the Kamakura period, Buddhist funeral ceremonies had become universal. Such developments enabled the reconciliation of pre-Buddhist practices with Buddhism in the popular mind.

1801-1900 Years after Parinibbana (1256-1356 CE)

In 1257, the Lankavamsa was established in Thailand (Siam) by the monks who came to Sri Lanka and obtained the Upasampada. The headquarters were in Nakon Sri Thammarath. Later the king of Thailand, Ram Kamhaing, having heard of the good work of these monks, invited them to his capital at Sukothai and gave his support to the propagation of the Dhamma. Detailed accounts are given in one of his inscriptions, circa 1277. Thus in both Burma and Thailand, the supremacy of the Theravada tradition, as preserved in Sri Lanka, was firmly established. From Thailand it spread to the neighbouring kingdoms of Cambodia and Laos.

The greatest event was the accession of the Mongol ruler Kublai Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan, to the Chinese throne. In 1260 he established his northern capital at Peking (Khanbaliq) and in the following year he was proclaimed the Emperor of China. This Yuan Dynasty ruled from 260-1378. Kublai Khan's spiritual teacher had been a distinguished Tibetan Sa-skya monk called Hphags-pa, and after he became Emperor of China he gave every encouragement to the Tibetan monks of the Sa-skya sect to spread Tibetan Buddhism. His empire stretched as far as the Baltic in the north and northern Burma in the south, and from Korea to the Caspian Sea. These Mongolian rulers were the most powerful Buddhist monarchs in history. Although there is no record of their using force to spread Buddhism, throughout Kublai Khan's empire there was a revival of Buddhism.

For the second time Buddhism appeared in certain parts of Central Asia under Mongol rule. Buddhist communities seem also to have lived in the basin of the Lower Volga. It is undeniable that the Mongolians exerted an appreciable cultural influence not only on the Russians who were vassals of the Mongolians but also on the Latvians, Lithuanians and the Estonians.

According to a faint tradition, Buddhism seems to have reached Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, the three Baltic republics in Eastern Europe, for the first time during Asoka's reign. Although there is no definite historical evidence, it is pointed out that the influence of early Buddhism is seen in folk songs and tales which are replete with faith in rebirth and the law of karma. It is also shown that the Estonian national epic about the hero Kalevipoeg, son of Kalev and Lind, contain essential Buddhist concepts. The second wave of Buddhist influence seems to have taken place during this period.

In Tibet, Kublai Khan conferred the sovereignty of Central Tibet upon the high priest of Sa-skya (1270). This was the beginning of the new theocratic rule in Tibet. Sa-skya monks were greatly devoted to learning and were excellent teachers. They also took advantage of the patronage of Kublai Khan. Their influence was greatest in Mongolia but it penetrated China and even Korea. At its peak, during the Yuan period, there were over 42,300 Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and about 213,000 lamas, monks and nuns.

The Tibetan Canon was also consolidated during this time. Bu-ston (1290-1364) was both a commentator and a historian of repute. He systematically arranged the existing Tibetan translations of Buddhist works into two comprehensive groups, called Bkah-hgyur ("The Word of the Buddha") in 100 volumes and the Bstan-hgyur ("The Treatises") in 225 volumes. They comprise the Tibetan Buddhist Canon that has been adhered to down to the present day.

With the new developments many Chinese monks left for Japan, but their influence on the development of Japanese Buddhism was not so striking, perhaps due to the language barrier. In 1267, Ippen, who taught dancing Nembutsu, started the Jishu School of the pure abode type. The popularization of Buddhism during the Kamakura period continued during the century.

In India, the Buddhist monasteries, the centres of Buddhism, were destroyed unceremoniously by the early Muslim invaders who displayed great cruelty. Buddhism also had to face the stiff opposition of the reactionary forces of the Brahmanical society. Under these circumstances Buddhism took its last shelter in the frontiers of Bengal, mainly in the regions of Chittagong and Tripuri.

Some attempts to revive Buddhism in southern India were made by Sri Lankan rulers. Senalankadhikara restored, or built anew, a shrine housing a stone image of the Buddha at Kanchi (Conjeevaram). Circa 1344, the hierarch Dhammakitti restored a shrine at Dhanayakataka (Amaravati) and made generous offerings to it.

The sacred shrines of Sri Lanka came to be regarded with the same veneration as those in India. On numerous occasions, Burmese rulers sent offerings to the Sacred Tooth Relic and other sacred objects. In 1284, Emperor Kublai Khan sent a mission regarding the Sacred Tooth, Bowl, and Hair Relics. These events show how closely-knit were the Buddhist countries of the time.

1901-2009 Years after Parinibbana (1357-1456 CE)

The heyday of Buddhism was over and generally decadence had set in, heightened by the weakness of the Buddhist rulers. The only important developments were in Tibet.

The political stage was being set for a period of struggle against alien forces. The Turks under the Ottomans had built a vast Muslim empire and although for over 400 years the Christian Byzantine Empire was able to withstand the pressure by waging the Holy Crusades, in 1453 with the fall of Constantinople the empire crumbled. The commerce of the Indian Ocean was in the hands of the Muslim Arabs, who later took control of every trade into their hands with the fall of the

Cholas and the Sailendras, the great maritime powers. There were two expeditions during the reign of the third Ming ruler of China that went as far as Arabia, circa 1405-1411, but they did not achieve much in curbing the Arab maritime power. Pockets of Islamic culture began to appear along the maritime routes. Slowly but steadily they penetrated the life of the countries of the Malay Archipelago, more by inter-marriage than by war. Within the next 500 years, the vast Sri Vijayan kingdom, which supported a flourishing Buddhist community from the eighth to the thirteenth century, splintered into several Muslim states.

In China the rise of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) was not favourable to Buddhism. The earlier Yuan Dynasty, being Mongols, were opposed as foreign rulers. The opposition of the Chinese literati was even reflected in their transition to Japan. The Mongol rulers favoured Tibetan Buddhism. The rise of neo-Confucianism was partly due to national opposition to this favoured treatment given to Tibetan Buddhism. Some Ming rulers even prohibited Buddhist observances and practices. Towards the end of the Ming period Confucianism had gained in strength and the dark period of Buddhism had begun. Its influence was seen even in neighbouring countries, especially Vietnam, where too there was Buddhist persecution.

In Sri Lanka, Anuradhapura, the centre of Buddhism and also the political capital, was abandoned after a period of nearly 1,500 years. Polonnaruwa was held for only 300 years. After the devastating rule of Magha of Kalinga (1215-1236), which brought widespread destruction, the Sinhala rulers were forced towards the central and south-west regions. The frequent invasions by South Indian rulers and the shift of capitals resulted in a period of stress that even affected the cause of Buddhism. At times libraries full of valuable Buddhist books were burnt and Buddhist monks dispersed. Yet the kings remained Buddhist and gave whatever support they could offer for its sustenance. The monks of Sri Lanka, however, maintained their superiority in piety, erudition and scholarship. In 1361 a Sangharaja (chief monk) from Sri Lanka was invited by the then King of Siam to organise the sangha in that country. The Sihala sangha, which founded the Lankava sa, played a very important role in the consolidation of Theravada Buddhism in Thailand.

Tibet, due to its natural inaccessibility, preserved the Buddhism it received and grew from strength to strength. One of the greatest reformers of Tibetan Buddhism, Tson-kha-pa (1358-1419), lived in this century. Using Atisa's reformed teachings as a base, he cleansed the doctrine of deviations and superstitious beliefs and established a dedicated order of Buddhist monks based on sound learning, discipline and celibacy. The new sect was called Dge-lugs-pa ("School of the Virtuous"), popularly described as the "Yellow Hats".

In 1408 Tson-kha-pa founded the Ganden monastery, near Lhasa. In addition, he founded the temples of Depung and Sera near Lhasa and Tashi-Lhumpo in the Tsang province. They became celebrated centres of learning and continued the work of religious propagation in Mongolia and Siberia. After the power of the Sa-Skya-pa sect had dwindled, the Dge-lugs-pa came to be favoured by the Mongol rulers as spiritual leaders and later as temporal rulers of Tibet. Indeed, the Dge-1ugs-pa both temporally and spiritually dominated Tibetan Buddhism through the religious succession of the Dalai Lamas.

2001-2100 Years after Parinibbana (1457-1556 CE)

A new force entered the already troubled arena. In 1505 the first Portuguese ship reached Sri Lanka and southern India. In Sri Lanka, the Portuguese coat-of-arms was engraved on a rock, and a small warehouse and a Catholic church were constructed. Portugal was the first European maritime power to discover a direct sea route to India, and their intention was to capture the spice trade from the Arabs and spread Christianity with the aid of the sword. In the name of God, any heinous crime committed against the "heathens" was permissible. The inquisitions were a potent weapon used by the Catholics to try all cases of heresy, to censor books, to extort confession by torture and to inflict the penalty of death. During the first fifteen years of its existence, in Spain alone 10,000 persons were burnt to death and penalties were inflicted on 90,000. This tradition was the opposite of the peaceful tolerant attitude of Buddhism. The Portuguese were followed by the Dutch, and by the British and French.

Although Christianity had existed for over 1,500 years, there was no direct relationship with the East except during the time of the Roman Empire. After the rise of Mohammedanism, its chief pre-occupation was to save Christendom from Muslim encroachment. The discovery of new maritime routes brought different vistas and opportunities for the Christian Church, while for Buddhism, already weakened by Muslim encroachment, it became a fresh challenge. In 1549 Catholicism was taken to Japan by Francis Xavier.

Buddhism thus was further undermined. The only important historical record is the Kalyani inscription of 1476 in Burma which gives an account of the final victory of the Sihala monks. A Buddhist mission was sent to Sri Lanka by the Burmese king when Bhuvenekha Bahu II (1470-1478) was the ruler.

2101-2200 Years after Parinibbana (1557-1656 CE)

The Buddhist world was becoming further restricted. In Korea, during the time of the Yuan Dynasty of the Mongolian Empire, Tibetan Buddhism and practices spread to Korea. After the decline of this empire, the Rhee Dynasty, which supported Confucianism, came into power in Korea. Buddhism was dislodged from the position of being the state religion, thereby losing royal patronage. However, it remained the major faith of the masses. It later became greatly influenced by Zen Buddhism, which is the major component of modern Korean Buddhism.

In Japan the Edo period began in 1603 and continued until 1867. During this period Buddhism acquired the character of a national religion under the patronage of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Buddhist practices and ceremonies replaced Buddhist scholarship to the degree that Buddhism in popular belief lost its distinctive character. There was a similar development in India that resulted in Buddhism being completely absorbed by Hinduism. The religious environment was helpful for the resurgence of Shintoism.

In the northern countries, the Tibetan influence was still the greatest. Under the Ming Dynasty, Buddhism in China did not progress. In Tibet, the Mongolian chief Gusri Khan conferred the sovereignty of the whole of the country on the Dalai Lama. This would be considered a turning point in Tibetan history. Up to about the fifth Dalai Lama (1615-1680) they had divine suzerainty over only a part of Tibet. Gradually the Dge-lugs-pa gained power.

2201-2300 years after Parinibbana (1657-1756 CE)

There was the commencement of a Buddhist revival. In western Central Asia Buddhism appeared for the third time, being brought by the western Mongolian people called the Oirates. They went as far as the Volga and took Buddhism with them. However, no large monasteries appeared in the Porolzhye Steppes. The Kalmuk monasteries that existed were only of an itinerant type. In 1712, Buddhism appeared in the Baikal region. It began to spread among the Buryat nomads when 150 Tibetan monks came to the Selengin District and in 1741 the first Buddhist monastery in Buryati was built in the district. Buddhism as a religious teaching still exists in this region.

As seen from the introduction of Buddhism to the Baikal region, the Tibetan influence continued to be exerted outside Tibet, especially in Mongolia. The seventh Dalai Lama (1708-1758) was known for his learning, tolerance and asceticism. His reign was marked by the visits of Capuchin and Jesuit missionaries in Lhasa.

Christianity was spreading its tentacles far and wide, although there was opposition in certain countries. It was largely the work of Jesuits, known as great proselytizers. They acted mainly in the royal courts and became teachers to royal princes and princesses. Through them they influenced the court and even made use of the internal dissensions to obtain a political foothold. A typical example was in Sri Lanka where the Portuguese claimed legitimacy to the whole of the maritime provinces, first as the protector and then as the successor of the last king of Kotte, who as a young prince of seven, was baptized and then crowned (by crowning an effigy in Lisbon!) with the name Don Juan Dharmapala.

Due to the arrival of Christianity, the rulers of Japan gave new stimulus to Buddism to counter the action of the Catholic missionaries. Towards the close of the Edo period greater encouragement was given to Buddhist studies. There were also the reformists who despised the low ebb Buddhism had reached as a popular religion. The scholarly studies in Buddhism begun during this period laid the foundation of modern Buddhist studies in Japan. Among the important works of the period were the Mahayana studies of Tominagu Chuki (1715-45) and the Sanskrit studies of the Ven. Jiun Sonja (1718-1807), a monk of the Shingon sect.

Burma and Thailand continued their Theravada tradition. In Sri Lanka, Buddhism reached its lowest ebb due to political infighting and the sacrilegious activities of the Portuguese which were so intense that the Jesuit historian Father Fernao de Queroz, who wrote the voluminous book entitled *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon* confirmed the visions of a Catholic priest who had predicted the expulsion from Ceylon of the Portuguese as "a punishment from God for the misdeeds of the Portuguese". Kandy was made the new capital of Sri Lanka.

Thailand was able to repay its debt to Sri Lanka when at the request of King Kirti Sri Rajasinghe (1744-1881), King Boromkot (1733-1758) sent Thai monks to re-establish the Higher Ordination (*upasampada*). The mission was led by Maha Theras Upali and Ariyamuni and as a consequence the Siyamopali or Siyam sect was established in Sri

Lanka, headquartered in Kandy.

2301-2400 Years after Parinibbina (1757-1856 CE)

Muslim power was contained for some time mainly because of the growth of the European powers. In Europe the religious wars between the Catholics and the Protestants marked the history of the period. The discovery of sea routes affected the balance of power and with the Muslim Turks controlling the traditional routes to the East, the nation that gained maritime sovereignty virtually became the superpower. The Portuguese and the Spaniards, then the Dutch, French and English, took their turn. These colonial powers were soon to realize that when Europe was still in the Dark Ages, India, China and the East bonded together by Buddhism were living a highly intellectual, religious and artistic life. It was the European search for this "Wisdom of the East" that resulted in the great desire for the study of the Buddha's life and his teachings in the century to come, which marked the 2,500th year after the Parinibbana of the Buddha.

A firm foundation was laid by the works of early Indologists like Sir William Jones (1746-94) and HT Colebrook (1782). Other notable contributions which introduced Buddhism to the West included the collection of valuable Buddhist Sanskrit manuscripts brought from Nepal by BH Hodgson, British Resident in Nepal (1821-1841); the *Tibetan-English Dictionary* by Csoma de Koros (1834); the critical edition and translation of the *Mahavamsa*, the "Great Chronicle" of Sri Lanka, by George Turnour (1837); *Introduction a L' Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien* by Eugene Burnouf (1844); the translation of the Saddharma Pundarika, the Lotus Sutra, to French, also by Burnouf (1852); and the Latin translation of the Dharmapada by Professor Vincent Fausboll of Copenhagen (1855). The translation of the *Mahavamsa* assisted Princep to identify "Piyadasi-laja" in the inscriptions written in the Brahmi script of the third century BCE with Emperor Asoka. This discovery based on the Sri Lankan chronicle was a major breakthrough in the study of the ancient history of India and of Buddhism.

2401-2500 Years after Parinibbana (1857-1956 CE)

Credit should be given to Western scholars for their pioneering work in the revival of Buddhism during this century and its spread to the West. However, there was a systematic pillage of ancient texts and manuscripts from the monasteries, although sometimes with permission, as in the case of Hodgson. Being inspired by Buddhist thought, many European scholars came to the East with an unquenchable thirst to know, learn and see more. The colonial rulers encouraged these studies, as they were soon to realize the value of knowing a people, their thoughts and aspirations, in order to consolidate their position.

The period had a resemblance to that when Buddhism was first transmitted to China and Tibet, where the main pre-occupation initially was the translation of the Buddhist texts to their respective languages. However, there was one major difference. The former translations were undertaken by Buddhists with a keen interest to obtain a deeper comprehension of Buddhism for their own salvation. Many of those who translated the Buddhist texts during the current period were Christians or atheists. They had only a scholarly interest in the new knowledge. Translation of thoughts into a different language is difficult because a language grows within its own cultural milieu. It was a formidable task to render Buddhist concepts, such as *dukkha and anatta,* into Western languages that have grown in a non-Buddhist environment with concepts of God and Soul. They failed conceptually, but tried to succeed linguistically, leading sometimes to completely erroneous interpretations. Scholasticism was a feature of the revival of Buddhism during this century. These remarks should in no way be taken as an attempt to lessen the contribution the pioneers made in the propagation of Buddhism in the West. The translations, mainly from Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese texts into Western languages, made a comparative study possible for the first time.

Pali texts were translated into many languages: into English by scholars such as Prof. TW Rhys Davids, Mrs Rhys Davids, W Stede, R Chalmers, V Trenckner, H Oldenberg, F Pischel, F Max Muller, Miss I.B. Horner, FL Woodward, Helmer Smith, E Hardy, the Ven. D Kosambi and others; into German by Karl Seidenstucker, KE Neumann, Otto Franke, Wilhelm Geiger, the Ven. Nanatiloka, Paul Dahlke, and others; into Russian by Minayeff; into Italian by KE Neumann, G de Lorenzo, PE Pavolini and others; into Polish by St Fr Michalski-Iwienski; and into French by Poussin, Fernando Huc, J Filliozat, L Renou, L Finot and others.

Some scholars who devoted their time largely to Mahayana Buddhist texts were E Burnouf, Vallee Poussin, A Weber, A Schiefner, Alexander Csoma de Koros, Samuel Beal, Hans Ludwig, R Schmidt, H Kern, Max Muller, B Nanjio, Th. Stcherbatsky, E Lamotte, G Tucci, V Bhattacharya, ND Mironov and J Takakusu. These were scholars from Germany, France, England, India, Japan and the USSR. Pioneering work on the study of Tibetan Buddhism was undertaken by Sarath Chandra Das, who in 1882 after his return from his travels in Tibet gave a series of lectures, "Indian Scholars in Tibet", in which he brought to light the work of the eminent Buddhist Scholar monks, Santaraksita, Kamalasila, Dipankara Srijnana or Atisa.

The first expedition to Central Asia by Sir Aurel Stein, the English archaeologist was in 1900/1901. The Central Asian Buddhist studies were undertaken by persons of eminence such as Louis de La Poussin, Hoernle, H Luders, Pargiter, FW Thomas, E Waldschmidt, H Hoffmann, R Pischel and S Levi.

A unique contribution to the spread of Buddhism in the West was made by *The Light of Asia* written by Sir Edwin Arnold in 1879. Up to now there have been over sixty editions in England and eighty in America, where the book seems to be more widely read than in England. A synopsis of the turn of events in the West has been made in the preface written by Sir Edwin Arnold:

> A generation ago little or nothing was known in Europe of this great faith of India, which had nevertheless existed during twenty centuries, and at this day, surpasses in the number of its followers and the area of its prevalence, any other form of creed. Four hundred and seventy million of our race live and die in the tenets of Gautama and the spiritual dominions of this ancient teacher extend, at the present time, from Nepal and Ceylon, over the Eastern Peninsula to China, Japan, Tibet, Central Asia, Siberia and even Swedish Lapland, India itself might fairly be included in this magnificent Empire of Belief, for though the profession of Buddhism has for the most part passed away from the land of its birth, the mark of Gautama's teaching is stamped ineffaceably upon modern Brahmanism, and the most characteristic habits and convictions of the Hindus are clearly due to the benign influence of Buddha's precepts.

Another event of great significance was the formation of the Pali Text Society in England in the year 1881 by Prof. TW Rhys Davids with the objective of "promoting the study of Pali by publishing ancient Pali canonical and commentarial texts in Roman characters, by publishing translations of them and from time to time publishing other works ancillary to the study of Pali". When it celebrated 100 years of its existence it had practically completed its task.

Eleven years later, in 1892, the Buddhist Text Society of India was founded. Some of the notable scholars were Mahamahopadhyaya Vidhushakar Sastri. Dr BC Law, Professor Barua, Dr Nalinaksa Dutt, Dr NP Chakravarty, Professor AC Banerjee and Dr Nihal Ranjan Ray. Santineketan in West Bengal, Patna and Nalanda in Bihar, Bombay, Poona and Baroda in western India, were active centres of Buddhist studies. One of the chief persons who was responsible for Pali studies in India was the Ven. Dharmananda Kosambi.

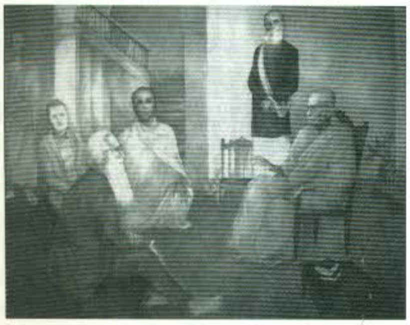
Some notable early translations following the publication of the *Pali-English Dictionary* by RC Childers (1875) were those of Fausboll, Oldenberg and Kern. Fausboll's translation of the Jatakas (1877-1891), which contributed largely to the study of the cultural material in Buddhist literature. Oldenberg, who with Rhys Davids translated the Vinaya Pitaka, opened a new field in Buddhist ecclesiastical studies. Kern in 1891 translated Aryasura's Jatakamala, a Sanskrit counterpart of the Pali Jatakas. This was followed by a translation of the Saddharma Pundarika, which evoked an urge to study more of the religious aspects of Mahayana Buddhism.

Buddhist scholarship was not only confined to Europe. It was almost universal. There were several universities, colleges and research institutes established in Japan after the Meiji Restoration (1868), some of which, like Otani, Ryukoku, Komazawa, Taisho, Koyasan and Rissho, were devoted to the advancement of Buddhist studies. B Nanjio introduced Sanskrit classes at Otani University and his publication of the Catalogue of the Chinese Tipitaka was the beginning of Chinese Buddhist studies. In the United States, *Buddhism in Translation* by HC Warren under the Harvard Oriental Series founded in 1891 and *Buddhist Legends* by EW Burlingame under the same series contributed considerably in popularising Buddhist studies.

Ven. Hikkaduwe Sumangala Maha Thera

The Ven. Hikkaduwe Sumangala of Sri Lanka, and the Ven. Ledi Sayadaw, the Ven. Abhidaja Maharatthaguru Nyaungyan Sayadaw and the Ven. Mingun Sayadaw of Burma, were sought after by many scholars because of their deep learning, insight and piety. An event of great significance to the Buddhist world was the holding of the Fifth Council (according to Theravada tradition) at Mandalay Burma, in 1871 and the engraving of the whole of the Tipitaka on 729 slabs of marble at the behest of King Mindeu. It received the support of the community of bhikkhus (Maha Sangha) of Sri Lanka, Siam, Cambodia and Laos, and provided an opportunity to compare and edit the Theravada Buddhist texts after nearly 2,000 years.

The deciphering of the Asokan inscriptions with the clue given by the *Mahavamsa,* which had been edited in Roman characters and translated into English (1837), created a wide interest in the West in Sri Lankan Buddhism. This was accentuated by the writings related to Buddhism by Christian missionaries such as Bishop P Brigandit, Bishop Coppleston and R Spence Hardy. Although their books had many errors they introduced to the West the Theravada Buddhism practiced in Burma and Sri Lanka.

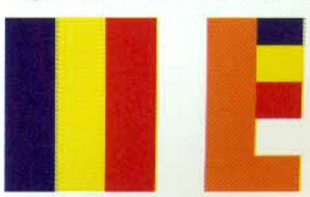

Ven.Sumangala Thera, Anagarika Dharmapala, Col. Olcott, Madam Blavatsky

In Sri Lanka there was much ridiculing of Buddhism through books and pamphlets printed in the vernaculars and distributed by Christian preachers in the propagation of their faith. This was in addition to the mass proselytizing of Buddhist children through the school system. These events lead to an open challenge being made by the Ven. Mohottiwatte Gunananda Thera to Christians to defend their faith. It was accepted by the Christian clergy and five public debates were held between 1864 and 1873 at Baddegama, Waragoda, Udanvita, Gampola and Panadura. The Panadura debate was the most important. Reports of this debate and the efforts made by the Sinhala Buddhists to safeguard their rights reached the West and inspired Henry Steele Olcott, a young American lawyer, Madam Blavatsky, Charles Leadbeater and others to come to Sri Lanka and help in fighting for the Buddhist cause. The defeat of the Christians in debate broke the myth of the infallibility of the Christian church more than anything else, and was one of the major contributing factors to the Buddhist revival in the country.

On arrival, Henry Steele Olcott became a Buddhist and formed the Buddhist Theosophical Society for the purpose of establishing English schools for Buddhist children. He also made representations to the British rulers and in 1885 made them declare the full moon day of Vesak (May) a public holiday. He also felt the need of a special flag for Buddhists and the six-colour flag that was developed in Sri Lanka is now accepted by all the world's Buddhists.

One of the great Buddhist revivalists was Anagarika Dharmapala of Sri Lanka. He pioneered the cause that Buddha Gaya should be returned to the Buddhists and with this objective formed the Mahabodhi Society of India in 1891. In the years following, special missions were made by Anagarika Dharmapala to Burma, Japan and England to whip up enthusiasm among Buddhists. Because of his untiring efforts it was possible to commence work on the Dharmarajika Vihara at Buddha Gaya in 1920 and Mulagandhakuti Vihara at Isipatana, Saranath in 1928.

With the enthusiasm created by these world events, backed by the deep intellectual interest in Buddhism due to the untiring efforts of Western scholars, Buddhism gradually spread to the USA and European countries. In 1881, Rhys Davids was invited to deliver the Hibbert lectures in America in which he made his first announcement regarding the forming of the Pali Text Society. Across the Pacific there were also very close ties with Japan and many Japanese were finding new homes in the western coast of the United States. Buddhism spread from Japan to meet the religious needs of these communities. In 1887 Rev. Soryu Kubahi came to Honolulu and established the first Buddhist monastery. In 1893 the first World Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago in which Buddhism was represented. The inspiring presentations on Buddhism made by Anagarika Dharmapala of Sri Lanka and Soyen Shaku, a Zen Master from Japan, impressed the audience and helped to establish a foothold for Theravada and Zen Buddhist traditions in America. The first to embrace Buddhism was CJ Strauss of New York. In 1899 there was a Japanese mission to San Francisco led by Rev. Sokai Sonada, which was the first of its kind. Many of the American Buddhists were originally Japanese or Chinese and therefore almost all the major Buddhist sects in Japan sent their missionaries. Notable among them were the Higanshji Hongani Mission, Honpa-Honganji Mission, Jodo Mission, Nichiren Mission, Rinzai-

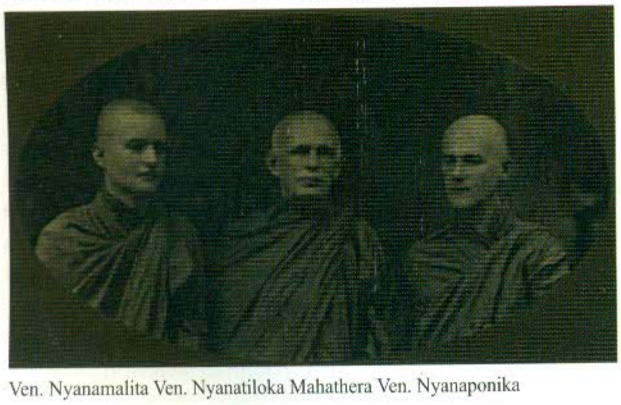

Buddhist Flag

Zen Mission, Shingon Mission and Soto Zen Mission.

Up to this century the chief influence on Japanese Buddhism was from mainland China. The work of the Pali Text Society in London resulted in a new development. Because of the translations of the Pali Tipitaka into English, Japanese Buddhist scholars came into contact with Theravada Buddhism for the first time. The Pali Canon was translated into Japanese in sixty-five volumes by Prof. J Takakusu and M Nagai. Prof. C Akamura of the Otani University was another outstanding scholar. There followed many comparative studies of Pali, Chinese and Tibetan canons.

The first Buddhist mission to England was made in 1908. It was led by the Ven. Ananda Metteyya, an English monk, formerly CHA Bennett, who had received his ordination in Burma. He was the second Englishman to be a Buddhist monk, the first being Gordon Douglas who was ordained in Colombo in 1899 as Bhikkhu Asoka. The Ven. Metteyya was drawn to Buddhism after reading Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*. The Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland was formed in 1907 with Prof. TW Rhys Davids as President. In 1924 this society was replaced by the Buddhist Society of England through the efforts of Mr and Mrs Christmas Humphreys. The idea of a Buddhist Vihara in London originated with Anagarika Dharmapala of Sri Lanka and with this intention he started a "Buddhist Mission" in 1928. It became a reality only in 1954, when the first Buddhist Vihara was established under the auspices of the British Mahabodhi Society with the Ven. Dr Hammallava Saddhatissa of Sri Lanka as chief incumbent monk.

Before long, Germany became one of the most important centres of Buddhism. The pioneering work of great Indologists like Max Muller and M Winternitz was followed by intensified studies of Buddhism. One of the first to call himself a Buddhist was the philosopher, Schopenhauer. Persons like KE Neumann, Karl Seidenstucker, Otto Francke, Wilhelm Geiger, and Leopold Von Schroeder were others who brought Germany to the forefront of Buddhist scholastic studies. However, the persons who had the greatest impact on the spread of Buddhism in Germany were Paul Dahlke, Dr George Grimm and the Ven. Nyanatiloka Maha Thera.



Ven. Nyanamalita Ven. Nyanatiloka Mahathera Ven. Nyanaponika

In 1925, Dahlke who was the author of very comprehensive and lucid treatises on Buddhism built the "Das Buddhistische Haus" in Frohnau, Berlin. Grimm was the founder of the "Lodge of the Three Jewels" in Munchen. The Ven. Nyanatiloka, who spent a great part of his life as a monk at the Island Hermitage, at Dodanduwa in Sri Lanka, has many standard works on Buddhism to his credit. His influence is greatly visible in shaping the history of Buddhism in that country. He ordained fifty-four Westerners, and among his bhikkhu-pupils were Germans, Britons, Frenchmen, Dutchmen, Italians, and Jews.

In France, interest in the study of Buddhism was pioneered by Dr Sylvan Levi and Prof. Louis De La Vallee Poussin. Levi's unique services were in the study of Sanskrit Buddhism and in 1892 he published the first chapters of the Buddha-carita of Asvaghosa. He also discovered two Chinese translations of the Milinda Panha. He had a profound knowledge of Chinese, Tibetan, and the Kuchean languages. His greatest discovery was the Sanskrit texts of the Vijnanavada School of Buddhism. Vallee Poussin was appointed a Professor of the University of Ghent in 1893. The Abhidharma Kosa of Vasubandhu was translated in 1923-31 and in 1930 the Vijnaptimatrasiddhi of Yuan-Chwang. In 1921, the Societe Belge d'Etudes Orientales was founded in France mainly through his efforts.

The translation of Buddhist texts created deeper interest in Buddhism and led to many writings on this subject. In 1896, Kern wrote his *Manual of Indian Buddhism* followed by *Histoire du Bouddhisme dans l'Inde*, which gave, for the first time, a concise and systematic survey of Buddhism in India. In 1878 CE, Rhys Davids wrote a book titled *Buddhism* which was a reply to Childer's article on Nibbana. Poussin's works on Mula Sarvasthivada Buddhism gave rise to many controversial topics, especially on *atma* and *anatma,* which engaged the attention of contemporaries like Mrs Rhys Davids and Stcherbatsky. The latter wrote two monumental volumes, *Buddhist Logic* (1931). Buddhist scholarship was thus growing in the West.

Similarly there was much Buddhist activity in the East. In 1907 the Jetavana Vihara was established in Nanking

China by Yang-Wen-Hui where he gathered about thirty youths to engage in Buddhist studies. In 1911, the All China Buddhist Association, headquartered in Nanking, was formed and was followed by many similar institutions in Nanking and Shanghai. A person largely responsible for the revival of Buddhism in China after the fall of the Chinese monarchy was Rev. T'ai Hsu (1888-1947). His activities were continued by his disciples Lu-Chen, T'ang Yong Tung, Chen-Ming-Hsu, and Rev. Fa-Fang. The last-mentioned studied Pali at the Vidyalankara Oriental College in Sri Lanka and at Santiniketan.

In Thailand, Buddhism continued to be the state religion. Two great institutes of higher learning established during the century were Maha Makut Raja Vidyalaya Academy and the Maha Chulalankara Raja Vidyalaya Academy. With the patronage of royalty, Thailand was becoming more and more prominent in the spread of Buddhism to the West.

However, the most prominent role in the spread and revival of Buddhism was played by Sri Lanka. Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Pirivenas (oriental colleges) founded in 1871 and 1873 respectively had become important centres of Buddhist learning and many monks from Thailand, Burma, Nepal, Cambodia and other Buddhist countries came to these two centres to study Buddhism and Oriental languages. Special residences for Burmese and Thai monks were built. Pre-eminent students were the Ven. Rahula Sankrityayana, Jagadisa Kasyapa and Ananda Kausalyayana of Nepal who on their return initiated the revival of Buddhism in their own countries. Being in the alumni of these two institutes, they formed an important religious link among the Buddhist countries.

Of monasteries, the most important were the Vajirarama in Bambalapitiya, the Island Hermitage in Dodanduwa and the Forest Hermitage in Kandy, all in Sri Lanka. Many Westerners, intent on obtaining a deep insight into Buddhism, came and lived the Dhamma as monks in these monasteries. Notable among them were the Ven. Nanavira and Nanamoli from England, the Ven. Nyanatiloka; the Ven. Nyanaponika and the Ven. Nyanavimala from Germany; the Ven. Nyanasatta from Czechoslovakia; and the Ven. Nanajivaka from Yugoslavia. Monks from the Vajiraramaya also conducted Buddhist *dhammadhuta* work. The leading monk was the Ven. Narada Maha Thera. His first mission was to Indonesia in 1934. Later his missions took him to Nepal, Vietnam, Singapore, and Bali in the East and to Sweden, Germany, England and many European countries in the West. The Ven. Amirtananda and the Ven. Subhodhananda who obtained higher ordination under Pelene Sri Vajiranana of Vajirarama were greatly responsible for the revival of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal.

An event which overshadowed political, social and economic life was the Second World War. The break-up of the vast colonial empires of England, France and other powers and the gaining of political independence was a major political development. In many of these newly-independent countries there was a strong measure of nationalism, which heightened the religious fervour that was growing. The war also had a lasting effect on the West. The youth who came to the East discovered a rich culture in Buddhism and when they returned after the war, they continued their interest. It may not be far from the truth to state that the discovery of Buddhism by the commoner in the West (including America) was mainly a result of the war. Buddhism after the war took a popular form in the West.

It was a common belief among the Buddhists, especially in the Theravada countries, that in the 2,500th year after the parinibbana of the Buddha there would be a great revival of Buddhism. In Burma, immediately after the gaining of political independence in 1948, a Buddha Sasana Council was established, under whose auspices several centres of Buddhist studies were opened. The inclusion of the *dhammacakka* the "Wheel of Law" of Buddhism in the Indian flag and the placing of an image of the Buddha in the Indian Lok Sabha was of great significance to Buddhists. In 1954, Dr Ambedkar, the architect of India's constitution, became a Buddhist under the influence of the Ven. Lokanatha of Italy and declared that he would devote the rest of his life to the revival and spread of Buddhism in India. He represented the Harijans or the depressed classes.

To commemorate the 2,500th year of the Buddha's parinibbana, falling on the full-moon day of the month of Vesak (May) 1956, a Council, referred as the Chaṭṭha (sixth) Sangayana, was held in Rangoon, Myanmar, commencing on May 17, 1954 with the collaboration of the learned monks coming from various countries of the world, particularly from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, India and Pakistan. The Council was held under the leadership of the Ven. Abhidhaja Maharatthaguru Bhadante Revata of Burma. The canon engraved on the marble slabs after the fifth council was compared with the Pali books now extant in Burma, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, India and the Pali Text Society and an authoritative version of the Pali Tipitaka was compiled. This was completed by the Buddha Jayanti year.

For greater unity among all Buddhists, the World Fellowship of Buddhists was formed in Sri Lanka in 1950 CE. Writing on this event a decade after, the founder President, Dr GP Malalasekera of Sri Lanka wrote as follows:

> For nearly a thousand years because of circumstances beyond the control of the Buddhists, the Buddhist nations had been cut off from each other and there had grown, if not actual enmity, much distrust and suspicion, particularly between followers of the Theravada and those of the Mahayana. Happily now, the position is completely different. Misunderstandings have been removed and the fundamental unity of Buddhism, in spite of the diversity of external forms and ceremonial ritual, has been recognized. There are frequent exchanges of visits and pilgrimages of scholars and students and many missions of goodwill. Buddhists everywhere now feel kinship as the members of a single family. The six coloured Buddhist flag, which until 1950, was used only in Ceylon, has become the symbol of international Buddhism and flies everywhere at Buddhist gatherings, from Iceland to Korea and Japan, from South Africa to Hawaii and Brazil. The full moon-day of May (Vesak) is celebrated in every Buddhist country.

The delegates came from twenty-nine different countries from both East and West to the inaugural meeting.

The climax of all these events was the Buddha Jayanti, which was celebrated the world over. The lead was taken by Sri Lanka as it was of dual significance, namely the 2,500th year of both the parinibbana of the Buddha and the founding of the Sinhala nation by Prince Vijaya. A Cabinet paper was presented in 1954 by the Hon. Abeyratne Ratnaike, Minister of Home Affairs, who urged that the occasion was of "the utmost national importance as to merit full-scale state participation". On the recommendation made by a special Cabinet sub-committee, the Government of Sri Lanka passed an enactment in Parliament to establish a special body to commemorate the event, called the Lanka Bauddha Mandalaya with seventeen Committees and an Executive Council. The Secretary General was Dr Ananda Guruge. It undertook a wide-ranging programme of religious, literary, educational and commemorative activities that ranged from the complete restoration of the famous Temple of the Tooth (Dalada Maligawa) in Kandy to its present form to many literary undertakings as the translation of the Pali Tripitaka into Sinhala, and the compilation of an Encyclopaedia of Buddhism and a Sinhala Encyclopaedia. Prof. GP Malalasekera and Prof. CE Hettiarachchi, respectively, were the chief editors of the last two major activities.

The greatest wish of many a Buddhist was to visit the places closely associated with the life of the Buddha. Centuries before, many a Chinese monk trekked along the ancient silk route via Central Asia to achieve this purpose. However, as both land and sea routes were so hazardous only a few could accomplish this journey. The Buddha Jayanti created a new fervour among the Buddhists to re-visit these places of Buddhist pilgrimage. Largest numbers came from Japan and were taking the fullest advantage of the modern means of transport and the post-war economic affluence. Sri Lanka invited dignitaries of Buddhist countries for the year-long celebrations that centred round each of the full-moon days of the year. All these events that centred round the Buddha Jayanti resulted in closer ties being developed among Buddhists.

Professor Gunapala Malalasekera - Founder President WFB

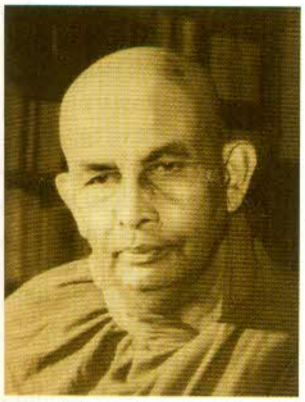
2501-2545 Years after Parinibbana (1957-2011 CE)

Two major political events resulted in greater attention being focussed on Buddhism throughout the World. In 1959, the Dalai Lama fled Tibet to India, under pressure from mainland China. The Tibetan refugee problem was universally canvassed and many Americans and Europeans helped in the sponsoring and education of several of the younger Lamas. The Ven. Lama Trungpa and the Ven. Lama Akong established the first Tibetan monastery in the West. The Ven. Lama Chime Rinpoche established the Kham Tibetan House and the Marpa Institute in eastern England and the Gelugpa School started the Manjusri Institute in western England. Similar centres were also opened in Switzerland and the USA. Tibetan Buddhism, which influenced Chinese, Mongolian and Korean Buddhism, especially after the Chinese Yuan period, came to the West after 1959. His Holiness the Dalai Lama extended his religious influence from the Dharmasala established in Himachal Pradesh in India; but to what extent the scholastic and religious tradition maintained in Tibet could continue is for the future years to see. Since 1959, His Holiness has received over eighty-four awards, honorary doctorates, prizes, etc., in recognition of his message of peace, non-violence, inter-religious understanding, universal responsibility and compassion. In 1989 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent struggle for the liberation of Tibet and he also became the first Nobel Laureate to be recognized for his concern for global environmental problems. He has authored more than seventy-two books. His towering personality has brought Buddhism to the forefront in the modern world.

The second event was the persecution of Buddhists in Vietnam in 1963 by the Dien's Catholic regime. A few Buddhist monks and nuns in Vietnam immolated themselves without trepidation. The very entry of the USA in the Vietnamese war became a highly political issue and there was much agitation the world over. Many a young American returning from the war front had an urge to learn more of Buddhism and its cultural heritage. Due to these events, in many American universities Buddhism was studied under comparative religions and in certain universities like Wisconsin and California even chairs for the study of Buddhism were created. At Harvard and Yale Universities, Centres for the study of World Religions were established. The natural inquisitive mind of the American was turned towards the study of Buddhism.

After the Buddha Jayanti, new Buddhist missions were undertaken. In 1956 the first Buddhist society in Brazil was founded by Dr Mutino Nunes de Azevedo. The first Theravada Buddhist Vihara was inaugurated on June 8, 1967, in Leopoldina, Rio de Janeiro when the Society invited the Ven. Talpitiye Anuruddha of Sri Lanka to be the resident monk. A meditation centre was established in Santa Theresa in the vicinity of Rio de Janeiro. In Sao Paulo there were several Japanese Judo Shin temples and a Zen temple, catering for the spiritual needs of nearly 250,000 Japanese Buddhists.

In 1964 there was a visit to the USA by the Ven. Madihe Pannasiha Mahanayaka Thera of Sri Lanka accompanied by this writer, which resulted in the establishment of the first Theravada Buddhist Vihara in Washington DC in 1965 under the auspices of the Sasana Sevaka Society, Maharagama, and the Government of Sri Lanka. Currently, there are over fifty Theravada Buddhist Centres in America.



Ven.Madihe Pannasiha Maha Nayaka Thera

The first Japanese Buddhist temple in Canada was built at the Ishikawa Hotel in Vancouver in 1905. Over time, the Japanese Jodo Shinshu branch of Buddhism became the prevalent form of Buddhism in Canada. A substantial expansion of Buddhism in Canada began in the last half of the twentieth century. Changes in Canadian immigration saw a massive influx of immigrants from Japan, Sri Lanka, and South-East Asian nations, all of which have strong Buddhist histories and demographics. In 1974, the Toronto Buddhist Vihara Society Incorporated was formed and in June 1978 the Toronto Buddhist Vihara was established under the auspices of Mahatheras Piyananda and Gunaratana of the Washington Vihara and the Ven. Piyadassi of Vajirarama, Sri Lanka. Approximately 1% of Canadians are Buddhists.

In Europe today, there are many Buddhist organizations belonging to all schools of Buddhism. In 1957, the first Theravada Buddhist Mission headed by Bhikkhu Soma of Vajiraramaya, Sri Lanka, was sent by the German Dhammaduta Society founded by Asoka Weeraratne. The Berlin Vihara located at Das Buddhistiche Haus of Paul Dahlke in the Frohnau locality of Berlin continues to be maintained by this society. On October 13, 1975 the Buddhist Union of Europe was formed in Paris by representatives of most Buddhist groups from Germany, Austria, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium and Switzerland. Delegates from England were also present. It was an interesting phase in the history of Buddhism in Europe. Earlier Buddhists were reserved as they were looked upon as followers of a strange faith. This period has passed and today there is a great demand for Buddhism. The establishment of the Buddhist Union is an important historical development in the spread of Buddhism in Europe as European Buddhists have now identified themselves as such and have realized that there are common obstacles to the propagation of Buddhism which should receive their attention. The existence, due to historical reasons, of different groups is taken "as a source of useful comparison rather than a source of rivalry". In a recent almanac of European Buddhist organizations and those affiliated with Buddhist studies, addresses of 150 organizations have been given of which eight are in Austria, seven in Belgium, nineteen in Germany, twenty-seven in France, sixty-three in Great Britain, one in Hungary, ten in Italy, eleven in the Netherlands, and five in Poland. This indicates the widespread nature of Buddhism in Europe to-day.

There are also Buddhist groups in Scandinavia and Switzerland. The Buddhist Society in Sweden was formed in 1957 in Guttenberg as a result of a visit to that country by the Ven. Narada Maha Thera in 1954. In 1966, a Buddhist Research Centre was set up at Halle University in the German Democratic Republic under the leadership of Professor Heinze Mode.

The first mission to West Africa was undertaken by the Ven. Piyadassi of Sri Lanka in 1967 to Ghana. He took two Bodhi saplings from Anuradhapura and planted them on the full-moon day of the month of Poson (June) 1967 at the Black Star Square in Accra. The Ghanaian Buddhists have now formed a Buddhist Society called The Maha-Bodhi. The Uganda Buddhist Centre in Kampala was founded in 2005 by Bhikkhu Buddharakkhita, a Ugandan monk, after a long quest which took him to India, Thailand, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the USA where he received higher ordination in 2002 at the Tathagatha Meditation Centre, California. He learned meditation practice for eight years at the famous West Virginia Meditation Centre under the guidance of the Ven. Henepola Gunaratana of Sri Lanka.

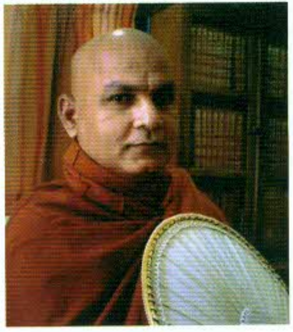
In Australia there was widespread interest in Buddhism after the Tibetan and the Vietnamese incidents. Buddhist associations started to appear during the past twenty-five years and today there are about eight associations spread throughout Australia. As a further development the Buddhist Federation of Australia was formed in Melbourne for the purpose of developing and maintaining contacts between the various Buddhist groups. The oldest organizations are the Buddhist Society of New South Wales, the Buddhist Society of Victoria and the Buddhist Society of Western Australia. Monks from both Sri Lanka and Thailand are engaged in Dhammaduta work. There are also centres of Zen, Vietnamese and Tibetan Buddhism, but the Theravada tradition is strongest in Australia.

Recognition of the full-moon day of Vesak as a day of observance by the United Nations General Assembly in 1999 was a notable development. This was in consequence to a resolution passed on a proposal made by the Ven. Kurunegoda Piyaratana Nayaka Thera, the chief incumbent of the New York Vihara, at an International Buddhist Conference held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 1998. It was Lakshman Kadiragamar, the then foreign minister of the government of Sri Lanka, who successfully steered it through. (Please see Appendix II)

Conclusion

2555 BE (2011) marks the 2,600th Sambuddhatva Jayanti or the anniversary of the gaining of enlightenment of Prince Siddhartha under the Bodhi tree in Buddha Gaya, India. The idea of celebrating this historic event emanated from Sri Lanka. It was first mooted by the writer at a meeting chaired by the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka in 2005 in connection with proposed celebrations for the 2,550th year of the parinibbana of the Buddha. The question was raised as to what significance the year 2550 has and the writer mentioned that he did not see any special significance but that 2011 would be the 2,600th anniversary of the Enlightenment of Prince Siddhartha, which in fact was the birth of Buddhism and needs to be celebrated in a fitting manner. This idea was later developed by the Ven. Tirikunamale Ananda Anunayaka Thera of Vajiraramaya and this writer at a meeting of the Buddha Sasana Karyasadhaka Mandalaya, Colombo, in September 2007. On this initiative a twenty-point plan of action was formulated by the Buddha Sasana Karyasadhaka Mandalaya and presented to the four chief prelates in Sri Lanka. With their endorsement, the plan of action was presented to the Maha Sangha, the Government of Sri Lanka and the Buddhist public. Following this, a twenty-six member Presidential Steering Committee was appointed by the President of Sri Lanka comprising eighteen leading Buddhist monks and four knowledgeable laymen who were recommended by the four prelates, and four ex-officio members. There are many events that have been planned to celebrate this historic event at national and international levels. At such an historic juncture as this, it would be most opportune that the Buddhist world is made aware of certain significant developments.

Olcott Gunasekara



Ven Thirikunamale Ananda AnuNayake Thera

Although Buddhism has spread to new lands, especially to the Americas, Europe and Australia during the last 250 years, in Asia, which was the cradle of Buddhism for over two millenniums, there has been a gradual downturn. The whole of Central Asia, Persia and Hindu Kush, Kashmir, Punjab and Sind areas were lost to Islam. After the fall of the Sri Vijaya Kingdom and the rise of the Muslim Sultanate of Malacca, Malaysia and Indonesia including Java and Sumatra, these lands too were lost to Islam. India once again became a predominantly Hindu state, with Muslims as the second largest minority. Islam is still gaining ground demographically both in the West and East.

The Asian Buddhist countries are also facing a new threat from evangelical Christianity. Korea, which was predominantly a Buddhist country, has now a larger Christian population (29.2%) compared to Buddhists (22.8%). The rest adhere to various new religious movements. In China, too, there is a rapid spread of Christianity, which represents nearly 5% of the population.

Christianity came with Portuguese, Dutch, British and French colonialism. Torturous and other harsh methods like the inquisition were used in the initial spread of that religion and for the first time Buddhism came face to face with an organized religion. The spirit of Christianity was contrary to the tolerant spirit of Buddhism. With political patronage given by the colonial rulers, although a minority, the Christians became the ruling class. The Buddhist countries of Sri Lanka, Burma, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos underwent nearly 500 years of political and religious suppression and in all these countries political independence was followed by much internal strife. Sri Lanka, for example, was able to end thirty years of terrorist activity that had international links only in 2009 and is today battling the many social and political consequences. In all these countries Christianity has a firm foothold.

In this changing scenario, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *ECCLESIA IN ASIA* of Pope John Paul II to the Bishops, priests and deacons and all the lay faithful made in 1999 in New Delhi has to be seriously taken note of. He has decreed:

> With the Church throughout the world, the Church in Asia will cross the threshold of the Third Christian Millennium marvelling at all that God has worked from those beginnings until now, and strong in the knowledge that "just as in the first millennium the Cross was planted on the soil of Europe, and in the second on that of the Americas and Africa, we can pray that in the Third Christian Millennium a great harvest of faith will be reaped in this vast and vital continent".

Work has already begun and in the Preface to the book *People's of the Buddhist World – A Christian Prayer Guide* that Paul Hattaway, International Director of "Asia Harvest" has compiled, he writes:

> Bob Pierce, the founder of World Vision, often prayed, "Let my heart be broken with the things that break the heart of God." "Does it break God's heart that today that hundreds of millions of Buddhists are marching to hell with little or no gospel witness? Does it break the Saviour's heart that millions worship lifeless idols instead of the true, glorious Heavenly Father? Does it pain the heart of the Father that so few Buddhists have ever heard of his beloved Son?" May we pray the same prayer and, equally importantly, may we possess the same determination and motivation to do something about it as Bob Pierce did.

The many distortions seen in the books and treatises dealing with Buddhism and issued in several languages from presses the world over are a third area of concern. Professor GP Malalasekera once observed that some of these publications are "but travesties of the truth and written by people who have no real knowledge of the Dhamma and have no sympathetic understanding of the teachings of the Buddha". The Buddhist world today needs a concerted effort, learning from the historical experience in India, China and Japan, to give to the world the real teachings of the Buddha. Compromises in philosophical thought and practices will gradually erode the uniqueness of Buddha Dhamma.

The Buddhists of Sri Lanka under the leadership of the Maha Sangha have preserved until now both the teachings of the Buddha in its pristine purity and the Buddha's dispensation. The greatest challenge, when the Buddhist World is celebrating the 2,600th year of the Enlightenment of the Buddha and the appearance of the Buddha Dhamma, is to preserve the Dhamma and its noble traditions in the manner the Buddha taught for the benefit and weal of the many. In this regard the Maha Sangha, the governments of Buddhist countries and the Buddhist lay community have a great responsibility and if they fail by their own folly and irresponsible actions a future moment may never occur as world forces continually change.

It is to the credit of Buddhism that during this long history of 2,600 years there were no religious wars to spread the noble teachings of the Buddha. After gaining enlightenment the Buddha's clarion call was as follows:

Apārutā tesam amatassa dvārā – ye sotavanto pamuncantu saddhā

"Open are the doors to the deathless - let those who have ears repose trust".

There are no closed doors in Buddhism and it is the duty of the Buddhist world to preserve the Dhamma in its pristine purity by living, practicing and learning the Dhamma for one's own benefit and for the good and well-being of all beings that are and that are yet to come. In this regard, governments of traditionally Buddhist countries have a historical duty to protect and foster the Buddha Dhamma.

(Please refer to the summery of the Buddhist Chronology)

Notes

(1)Rahjagaha (80,000), (2) Isipatana, Benares (12,000), (3) Jetavana, Savatthi (60,000), (4) Mahavana Vihara, Vesali (18,000), (5) Gositarama, Kosambi (30,000), (6) Dakkhinagiri, Ujjeni (40,000), (7) Asokarama, Pataliputta (160,000), (8) Kasmira desa (280,000), (9) Pallavabhogga (Persian country) 460,000, (10) Alasanda (Alexander), the city of Yonas (30,000), (11) Vinjha forest monasteries (Vindhyas) 60,000, (12) Bodhi-Manda-vihara (Bodhi Gaya) 30,000, (13) Vanavasa country (Banavasa, North Kanara) 80,000.

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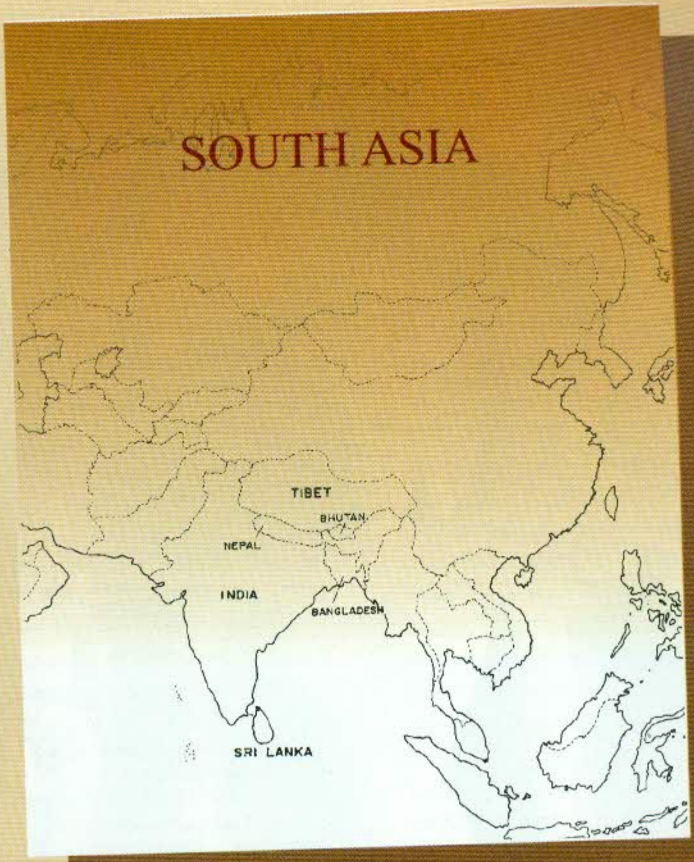
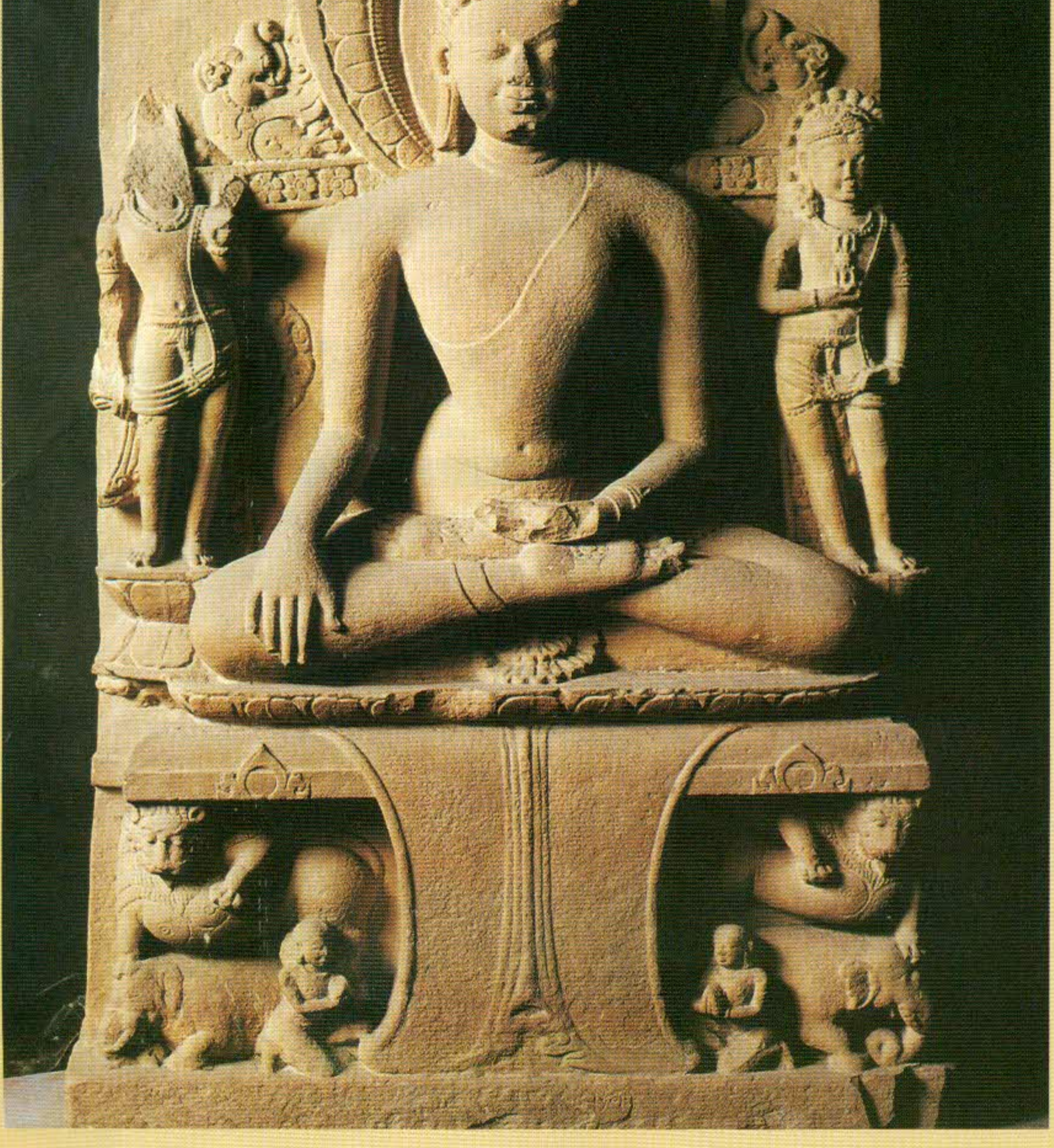
SOUTH ASIA


TIBET
BHUTAN
NEPAL
INDIA
BANGLADESH
SRI LANKA

India
Sri Lanka
Nepal
Bangladesh
Bhutan
Tibet



ESSAY 3

Buddhism in India

Past, Present and Future

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Introduction

The full-moon day of the month of Vesakha in the year 2011 marks 2,600 years of the Perfect Enlightenment of Gautama the Buddha. This is an important occasion in the history of the world in general and that of Buddhism in particular. This is the time for introspection into our past in order to understand our present. Learning about our present condition through the past can give us insight into our future.

The history of human civilization during the last three millennia has shown us the extraordinary potential of Buddhism not only to adapt to different environments but also to shape the world around it. It has also proved its intrinsic strength of reviving itself from ruins in ever-new forms. It has also displayed its dynamism while addressing new challenges of a distinct nature. It is still exhibiting its immense capacity of being relevant in the modern age by providing solutions to the problems of present-day. We are also witnessing its ability to engage and interact with modern scientific knowledge and the value system. Thus, the revitalzsing energy of the Buddha Dhamma is inspiring the modern world as it did 2,600 years ago.

Buddhism today is a growing trend in India and the West amidst adverse circumstances. Present Indian society, working to realize the objectives of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice through a democratic political setup, is facing challenges such as social, political and economic disparity, regional, religious and communal intolerance. In this situation, the moral, scientific and egalitarian teaching of Buddhism is providing a new light to Indian society.

The present essay takes an overview of Buddhism in India in the past and tries to assess its status at present. It also points out the possible directions in which Buddhism might or should develop in future.

Buddhism in the Past

Inception of the Buddha Dhamma

As commented by PL Vaidya (1997:10), "Philosophical ideas and doctrines do not spring up unexpectedly, but grow out of old ideas." This is in accordance with the Buddhist principle of Dependent Origination. When we study the inception of Buddhism it is not possible without taking into account the social, political, economic and religious background of Buddhism. It is well-known that the period when Buddhism appeared on the cultural scene of India, approximately the fifth or sixth century BCE.[1] India was passing through a state of transition. There were changes taking place in all walks of life. The political picture was fast-changing with the fall of small republic states, giving way to larger monarchies. The Aṅguttaranikaya lists the names of sixteen states during the Buddha's time. They include Aṅga, Magadha, Kasi, Kosala, Vajji, Malla, Chedi, Vatsa, Kuru, Pancala, Matsya, Śaurasena, Asmaka, Avanti, Gandhara and Kambhoja. In addition, there were some republics (*gaṇarajya*), following the democratic political system. They were: the Śakyas of Kapilavastu, the Mallas of Pav and Kusinara, the Licchavis of Vaisali, the Videhas of Mithila, the Kolīyas of Ramagrama, the Bulis of Allakappa, the Kaliṅgas of Resaputta, the Mauriyas of Pippalavana and the Bhaggas with their capital on the Suṁsumara hill. However, with the emergence of the two major empires of Kosala and Magadha the smaller republics began to decline, partly due to their inherent weakness and partly due to external pressure. This centralization of power resulted in the emergence of new power centres in the form of cities. The process of urbanization gave a boost to trade and commerce, along with agriculture. This new economic situation gave rise to a class of wealthy merchants and farmers with surplus resources necessary for sustaining the unproductive class of ascetics.

The transition in the political and the economic situation influenced the socio-religious life of the people. Society became stratified into four major classes based on the division of labor, i.e. Brahmaṇa (the priestly class), Kṣatriya (the governing class), Vaisya (the merchant class) and Śudra (the serving class). However, when the social stratification received religious sanction through the theory of the divine origination of the class, as found in the Puruṣa-sukta of the Ṛgveda, it turned into a rigid system of caste, based on social hierarchies. The whole idea of caste was thus linked with the birth of a person in a particular family rather than the action he or she performed. This social stratification became extremely unyielding leaving no scope for social movement across the different castes.

On the religious front this was also a period of transition. In the changed political scenario, the Kṣastriya class started to assume importance over the Brahmaṇa class. The Kṣastriyas began to challenge the monopoly of Brahmaṇas in the religious field, causing the struggle for supremacy between the two. In order to retain their social status the Brahmaṇas took upon themselves the collective role of aide to the king. They promoted sacrifices to give religious sanction to the royal rule as well as a means to increase the material prosperity of the people. This resulted in the growing adherence to rites and rituals in day-to-day life. The predominantly ritualistic Brahmanic religion degraded with the inclusion of animal sacrifices and growing greed for wealth. It aroused extreme reactions from within and without the Vedic fold.

The Upaniṣadic seers opposed animal sacrifice as they realized that the happiness brought by sacrifices is temporary and one is denied the achievement of eternal peace. They advocated the life of renunciation in order to achieve long-lasting peace and thus included Vanaprastha "forest dwelling" and Saṁnyasa "renunciation" as the last two in the scheme of fourfold *asramas*, "stages of life". These seers discussed problems concerning the origin of the world, and its constituents. In the Upaniṣads such as the Bṛhadaraṇyaka and the Maṇḍukya, one finds traces of the Buddhist notions of impermanence and the five aggregates. The life of renunciation proposed by these seers opened the doors to non-Brahmin aspirants, shaking the foundation of social stratification.

The non-Vedic ascetic schools - the Jainas, Parivrajakas, Ajivakas, etc. - upheld the life of detachment, of homeless wanderers. They proposed severe austerities and the path of self-mortification to achieve the final release from the cycle of birth and death. The Jaina texts talk of a fourfold classification of 363 schools into the Kriyavada, "the doctrine of action", the Akriyavada "the doctrine of non-action", the Ajnanavada "the doctrine of lack of definitive knowledge", and the Vinayavada "the doctrine of a strict code of conduct". Mahavira was the champion of the Kriyavada. He proposed that miseries are created by one's own self and one can control their causes. According to him, knowledge and good conduct are the means to salvation. He believed in the existence of soul, the other world, heavens and hells. According to him, the world is partly eternal and partly changing. Based on this twofold nature, Mahavira proposed the doctrine of *anekanta* "many possibilities", which is also known as the Syadvada. Mahavira's predecessor Parsva, the twenty-third prophet of the Jainas, proposed a fourfold code of discipline called *caturyama,* which includes non-killing, non-stealing, not telling a lie, and not having any worldly possessions. This tradition of Parsva is also known as *acelaka*s "naked ascetics". They later united with the followers of Mahavira who accepted white garments.

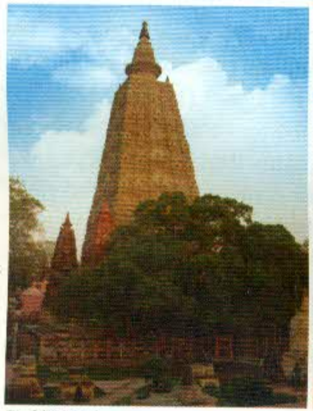
Makkhali Gosala of the Ajivaka sect of naked ascetics proposed the doctrine of the Niyativada, "Fatalism". He did not believe in any particular cause for human misery or deliverance and thus undermined the importance of human efforts. According to him, every being has a fixed course of life and must pass the entire course of *saṁsara* in order to be liberated. Hence, this doctrine is also known as the doctrine of Saṁsaravisuddhi. Makkhali Gosala's Ajivaka sect is the third major non-Vedic school after the Buddhists and the Jainas who received notable royal patronage.

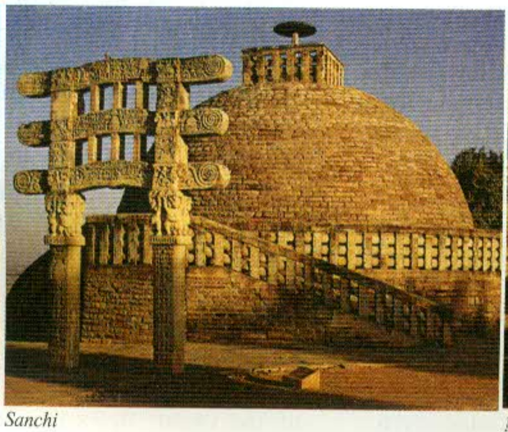
Puraṇa Kassapa proposed the doctrine of the Akriyavada "non-action" stating that the actions so-called "good" and "bad" are morally ineffective. Ajita Kesakambalin, whose doctrine roughly corresponds to the Carvaka or the Lokayata School, was said to be a materialist and a proponent of the theory of non-action. He did not believe in the existence of the soul or after-life or spiritual liberation. His doctrine is also called the Ucchedavada "the theory of annihilation". Pakudha Kaccayana, whose doctrine is known as the Sassatavada, "Eternalism", held that the world is constituted of seven elements that are immutable. They do not contribute to pleasure or pain as no one can affect any change in them. The last among them is Sanjaya Belaṭṭhiputta who was a former teacher of the Buddha's two great disciples Sariputta and Moggallana. His doctrine is known as the Vikṣepavada, "Doctrine leading to confusion" according to the Buddhist sources and Ajnanavada according to the Jain sources. He was a skeptic and did not venture to give categorical answer to any question facing the human mind.

Thus it is quite clear that the philosophical scenario at the time of the Buddha was full of extremities of eternalism and non-eternalism, doctrine of action and non-action, determinism and skepticism. The Buddha and Mahavira tried to tackle these extremities through their doctrines of Dependent Origination and Many Possibilities respectively. From the point of religious practice, the Buddha had to face extreme ideas in terms of involvement in sense-pleasures (*kamasukhallikanuyoga*) and self-mortification (*attakilamathanuyoga*), which he had to tackle by preaching the eightfold middle path.

Amidst these extremities was born prince Siddhartha, son of Mayadevi and Suddhodana, the chief of the Sakyas of Kapilavastu. After realizing the limitations of household life as narrated in the Pabbajjasutta of the Suttanipata, and realizing the vanity of worldly happiness, which is subject to birth, old age and death as mentioned in the Pasarasisutta of the Majjhimanikaya, Siddhartha left home to the displeasure of his parents. He then mastered meditation under the two teachers Aḷara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta. When he realized that even after mastering higher planes of meditation his mind was not completely free from attachment he decided to find his own way. He went to Uruvela and practiced severe austerities for six years. When he still failed to achieve the desired result, he decided to give up the path of self-mortification and started accepting some food. He then recollected an incident from his childhood when he attended the first level of meditative trance under a rose-apple tree. Practicing in the same manner, he soon found his way. On the full moon day of the month of Vesakha, spreading a bunch of grass under a Bo-tree, he sat making a firm resolve that he would not rise from his seat until he was successful in his mission. Attaining the four subsequent levels of mental absorption he guided his mind to recall his past lives. Thereafter, he turned to observe the rise and fall of beings in various realms. With this face-to -face interaction with impermanence, and the realization of the law of causality and the doctrine of karma, his mind became free from attachments and ignorance. Prince Siddhartha thus fulfilled his mission and attained the goal of Perfect Enlightenment to become the Buddha. Attainment of the threefold knowledge (*tevijja*) of past lives, the rise and fall of beings in various realms of life, the complete freedom from defilements, and the realization of the karmic law through the eternal principle of Dependent Origination, are the notable features of his enlightenment experience.

The Buddha then spent four weeks digesting his experience and formalizing the same for the purpose of preaching it to others. As per the account of the Vinayapiṭaka, during these four weeks the Buddha reflected upon the formula of *paṭiccasamuppada,* "Dependent Origination", comprising twelve links. The theory of Dependent Origination found expression in the Buddha's first utterances to a haughty Brahmin who encountered the Buddha a few days after his enlightenment. In the first discourse known as the Dhammacakkappavattanasutta, which he gave to five of his former colleagues, the Buddha emphasized the four noble truths of suffering, cause of suffering, cessation of suffering and a path leading to its cessation. In the same discourse, he elaborated on the noble eightfold path comprising right view, right aspiration, right action, right speech, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration as a means to complete liberation. In his next discourse known as the Anattalakkhaṇasutta, the Buddha highlighted the threefold characteristics of worldly phenomena as being impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*) and non-substantial (*anatta*). Thus, in these early sermons, the Buddha has set forth the core of his teachings in terms of the doctrine of Dependent Origination, four noble truths and the threefold characteristics, which are interconnected and therefore cannot be separated from each other. As the Buddha declared, he taught nothing but suffering and the means to put an end to it. He did not indulge in discussion on metaphysical issues, which are not directly concerned with human suffering in the present world. His teaching laid emphasis on morality, and tried to de-link religion from sheer ritualism. He preached abstinence from evil, the cultivation of good and purification of one's mind and laid down the threefold training (*sikkha*) in higher morality (*sila*), higher concentration (*samadhi*) and higher wisdom (*panna*). Perfection in morality brings out perfection in concentration and with perfect concentration one is able to get perfect insight into reality. The Buddha throughout his life opposed whatever was against morality and reason. He opposed superstitious beliefs, animal sacrifices, efficacy of


Buddhagaya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Nalanda

rites and rituals and social hierarchy based on birth. He opened the doors of his Saṅgha to all regardless of their caste, class, and gender. His pragmatic teachings and moderate approach in practice soon made his Dhamma popular among the masses.

The seed of the Buddha Dhamma that was sown in Sarnath near Varanasi in the first sermon grew into a large tree with thousands of monks, nuns and lay followers. Soon after the first sermon the Buddha's five former colleagues joined the Sangha, also many prominent personalities such as Yasa, the son of a merchant, the matted hair ascetic Kassapa and his two brothers, the Buddha's two chief disciples Sariputta and Moggallana, and his son Rahula. King Pasenadi of Kosala and Bimbisara of Magadha became the two great royal patrons of the Saṅgha. Besides them, a great merchant Anathapiṇḍika, and Citta, along with Visakha, a lady from a merchant family, and Jivaka, a royal physician, supported the Saṅgha. With its growing strength and popularity the Saṅgha faced challenges from within and without in the form of false charges against the Buddha, attempts on his life, schism in the Saṅgha and so on. In spite of these challenges, the Buddha continued to teach his Dhamma to the masses. At the age of eighty, he started his last journey to Kusinara. During this journey, he explained to Ananda many important matters regarding the Dhamma and told his disciples that after his demise, the Dhamma and Vinaya would be their sole masters. His final advice to his disciples was "Decay is inherent in all component things! Work out your salvation with diligence" (TW Rhys Davids 2007:173). After his great passing away on the full moon day of Vesakha between two Sala trees, there arose a battle for the possession of his mortal remains, which was stopped by a Brahmin called Droṇa. The mortal remains were then distributed among the fighting parties on which eight stupas were erected in different places. Thus ended the glorious journey of the master leaving behind him a great legacy for future generations.

The Two Buddhist Councils

After the great passing away of the Buddha, the monk community must have felt the need for preserving the teaching of the master as per his own instruction given in the Mahaparinibbana Sutta. Accordingly, the Ven. Mahakassapa, the then leader of the Saṅgha, suggested holding a council of leading Arhants to collect, classify and rehearse the teachings of the Buddha. According to the Pali sources,[2] with the help of King Ajatasattu the First Buddhist Council was held in the Sattapaṇṇi Cave Pavilion at Mount Vebhara at Rajagaha with 500 Arhants, including the Ven. Upali and the Ven. Ananda. It started in the second month of the rainy season and lasted seven months. The Ven. Ananda, who had the special privilege of hearing all the discourses of the Buddha, recited the Dhamma (Suttas), while the Ven. Upali recited the Vinaya, the disciplinary rules of conduct for the Saṅgha. Many scholars doubt the historicity of the First Council. However, the tradition accepts it unanimously. Though Ajatasattu was the patron of the first council, there is no mention of his interest in the propagation of the religion in the Mahavaṁsa commentary and the Manjusrimulakalpa (Mmk) (p. 471). Ajatasattu was succeeded by his son Udayibhadda (461-445 BCE) followed by his son Anuruddha and then his son Muṇḍa (445-437 BCE). The latter was succeeded by his son Nagadasaka (437-413 BCE) who was the last king of Bimbisara's lineage. The Mahavaṁsa describes this lineage as patricidal (*pitughatakavaṁsa*). It seems that Buddhists were not in favor of these kings and evidently as the Mmk says, Buddhism was on the wane during this period of about half a century. According to Buston, Ananda converted 500 Anchorite Brahmins with Madhyantika as their head who was entrusted with the task of propagating Buddhism in Kashmir. According to Dutt (1998:4), "Madhyantika's departure to Kashmir and his attempt to propagate Buddhism far away from Magadha is also an indirect hint at the unpopularity of the religion in the province of its origin." The throne of Nagadasaka was usurped by his minister Sisunaga (413-395 BCE). No incident of note occurred in the history of Buddhism during his reign. He was succeeded by his son Kalasoka (395-367 BCE), who was also called Kakavarṇin according to the Puraṇas. The Asokavadana maintains that Kalasoka was a successor of Muṇḍa. The Mmk refers to the successor of Sisunaga as Visoka. The Kathavatthu-aṭṭhakatha refers to him simply as Asoka. The outstanding event that took place during his reign is the Second Buddhist Council of Vaisali.

The Second Council was held at the Valukarama monastery, near the city of Vesali, about 100 years after the first council. It was held because the bhikkhus of the Vajji clan from Vesali preached and practiced ten unlawful modifications in the Rules of the Order (Vinaya). The 700 arahats led by the Ven. Yasa, the Ven.e Sabbakami and the Ven.e Revata took part in the council while King Kalasoka gave necessary support. In that council, which lasted eight months, the ten controversial points were discussed by both parties. When no consensus was reached, the matter was ultimately settled by forming a council of monks selected from the east and the west. After the ten controversial points were found unlawful they were refuted and a fresh rehearsal of the canon was undertaken for the stability of the Order. According to the Chinese and Tibetan translations of Vasumitra and others, the cause of the second council was the five points raised by a monk called Mahadeva. Thus, according to the Theravadin account, the cause of the second council was disciplinary and not doctrinal whereas, as per the non-Theravada sources, they are doctrinal as well as disciplinary. Whatever was the case, one thing is quite certain: at this point the first schism of the Saṅgha occurred, in which the Mahasaṅghika School parted ways with the traditionalist Sthaviravadins. It is reported that the Vajjian monks who were expelled from the Order on their refusal to obey the decision of the council held another council in which "both common folk and holy personages" (S Beal cited in PV Bapat 1997:88), making it a large congregation (*Mahasaṅgiti*). Thus, the group came to be known as *Mahasṅghika*s, "the members of the great congregation". As pointed out by scholars such as Przyluski and Dutt (1998:10), the geographical division of monks as easterners and westerners is quite clear from the details of the second council. It shows that at that time, Buddhism was prevalent in the entire central belt of India from Avanti to Vaisali, and from Mathura to Kausambi: Vaisali, Kausambi and Mathura being the three centres. The western group with its centres in Mathura and Kausambi was more orthodox and was the seat of Sthaviravadins and Sarvastivadins whereas the eastern region with Paṭaliputra as its centre was the seat of the Mahayana.

There is no unanimity about the successor of Kalasoka. According to Taranatha, in the reign of Śurasena, the supposed son of Kalasoka/Visoka, Mahadeva and his five propositions came about. According to the Mmk, he was succeeded by his minister, Nanda, who though surrounded by Brahmin ministers, made ample donations to the caityas built on the relics of the Buddha and died as a true Buddhist at the age of sixty-six. During Nanda's reign, there appeared a Bhikṣu called Naga who strongly supported Mahadeva's five propositions, which later led to the formation of four sects. According to N Dutt (1998:6), "It is a well-known fact that the Vatsiputriyas were one of the four sects, and probably this school came into existence at an earlier date but was recognized as a separate school at the time of King Nanda." According to Tibetan sources, in the reign of Mahapadma, the successor of Nanda, Sthiramati, the disciple of Naga, propagated his teacher's propositions to cause further division in the Saṅgha. However, according to N Dutt (1998:7), Mahapadma seems to be the title of Nanda, so these are not two different personages. Thus, dissensions in the Buddhist Saṅgha commenced in the reign of Kalasoka and multiplied in the reigns of Śurasena and Mahapadma Nanda.

The Third Theravada Council

The Third Council, which lasted nine months, was held at the Asokarama Monastery in the city of Paṭaliputra in the modern state of Bihar. Sixty thousand ascetics infiltrated the Order, polluting the dispensation by their corrupt lives and heretical views. That is the main reason why the Third Council was held in the presence of one thousand arhats in order to protect the Sasana. In this council, differences in the Dhamma as well as the Vinaya were discussed. The president of the council was the Ven. Moggaliputta Tissa and a book called Kathavatthu was written, refuting the heretical, false views and theories held by some disciples. The teaching approved and accepted by this council was known as the Theravada. The Abhidhamma Piṭaka was also discussed. However, from the accounts found in Asoka's rock edicts, "historians have concluded that the council was convened to solve a regional problem, involving the local Saṅgha at Paṭaliputra, and that Asoka was concerned not to give his support to one school against others but simply to sort out a situation which was bringing Saṅgha as a whole into dispute" (Skilton 1994:56).

Asokan Era and the Missionary Activities

King Asoka, born in 304 BCE, was the third emperor of the Mauryan Dynasty and the best-known ancient ruler of India. He came to the throne in 270 BCE after a power struggle that resulted in the death of one of his brothers. In 260 BCE, Asoka attacked Kaliṅga (present day Orissa), but the war resulted in much loss of life. In remorse, Asoka renounced war forever and became a Buddhist. He erected rock and pillar edicts in order to convey the message of the Dhamma to his subjects, including the monk community. Some of Asoka's edicts form the earliest known epigraphs in the subcontinent and there are twenty known pillars that Asoka commissioned that display Buddhist symbols such as the wheel and the lion. Asoka had a sculpture of four lions placed on top of each of his pillars. These lions remain a national symbol of India today.

Asoka sent missionaries to South-East Asia, Cyrenia (present day Libya), Egypt, Syria, and Macedonia, Greece, Gandhara, Kashmir, the Himalayan regions, Aparantaka, Vanavasi, Mysore, and Suvarṇabhumi (Malay and Sumatra). His son Mahinda, who became a Theravada monk, was sent to introduce Buddhism to Sri Lanka. "It is he who paved the way for the Buddhist missionaries – occasionally helped by kings like Kaniṣka – to take Buddhism to Central Asia, China, Japan, and Tibet in the North, and to Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and other countries in the South" (PV Bapat 1997:53). Through these missionary activities, a boost was given to the expansion of Buddhism, which had lasting and far-reaching effects. Buddhism became a dominant religious force under Asoka. He was the first powerful monarch to practice Buddhism. He united most of the subcontinent and introduced it to Buddhism.

Buddhism in the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom

From around 180 BCE, foreigners began invading north-western India, the first among them being the Greeks. Among the Macedonian kings recorded in Indian history, Menandros (Milinda in Indian languages) occupies a unique place. He invaded India and ruled an area from central India to Afghanistan from approximately 160 to 140 BCE. He performed many acts of piety and held a number of debates with a Buddhist monk called Nagasena. These debates are known as the Milindapanha, "Questions of King Milinda". The oldest elements of the work that are common to both the Pali text and its Chinese translation offer a view of certain aspects of Indian Buddhism during the first and the second centuries BCE. The Milindapanha depicts Buddhist doctrine in the transitional period between the Agamas and the development of the Abhidharma literature.

Inscriptions found in the Swat Valley indicate that a number of Greeks had converted to Buddhism by the first century BCE. They contributed to the development of Buddhism by giving large donations to Buddhist establishments in India. Asoka, on the advice of Moggaliputta Tissa, had sent a Greek monk Dhammarakkhita as his emissary to Aparnntaka to spread Buddhism, and he succeeded in converting thousands of people. Greek donors are also found in the inscriptions at Sanci, which points to the fact that some Greeks must have converted to Buddhism soon after their arrival in India. As is rightly remarked by Hirakawa (1993:230): "Buddhism, with its emphasis on doctrine and reason, was much more attractive to foreigners. Moreover, according to Buddhist teachings, all castes were fundamentally equal, and foreigners were not discriminated against. Not only the Greeks, but the foreign invaders of India who followed them, including the Śakas, Parthians, and Kuṣāṇas, often became supporters of Buddhism."

In the first century BCE, King Maues of the Śaka clan invaded India and ended the rule of Macedonian kings in north-western India. These Śaka rulers were patrons of Buddhism. Evidence of copper plates found at the stupa at Taxila (first century BCE) and inscriptions found at Mathura shows that the Saka kings built many stupas and monasteries for Buddhists. A Saka prince, Śuḍasa, son of Rajula, had donated land for supporting cave-temples to two monks, Buddhadeva and Budhila, belonging to the Sarvastivada School. This inscription (10 BCE) includes the earliest reference of the name of a school of the Nikaya Buddhism.

The Parthians, who had replaced the Śakas by the end of the first century CE, were Buddhist by faith. An Shih-kao, a Parthian prince, became a Buddhist monk and studied abhidharma. He also mastered a number of meditation techniques. During the reign of Emperor Huan (146-167), he arrived in China and translated many works from the agamas and the abhidharma literature.

Buddhism under the Suṅga Dynasty

Puṣyamitra Suṅga, the Chief Commander of the last Mauryan king, Bṛhadratha, came to the throne after assassinating his master. The Divyavadana and Tibetan historian Taranathạ describe him as the enemy of Buddhists as well as the destructor of stupas and viharas. However, most of the later kings of this dynasty favored Buddhism as a result of which this period (185–175 BCE) also witnessed the emergence of various schools of Buddhist sculpture at Sanci, Amaravati, Bodh Gaya and other places. Inscriptional records tell us that King Dhanabhuti-Vachiputa contributed a gate and stone building to the Buddhist stupa at Bharhut. His son Vadhapala made contributions for the erection of the railing that surrounds the stupa. Inscriptions carved on many of the railings at Bharhut indicate that the biography of the Buddha and the jataka were the favourite subjects for the carving. From titles such as the *peṭakin,* "one who upholds a *piṭaka*", *pancanekayika,* "one who is well-versed in the five *nikayas*", we come to know that the canon was already divided into at least the Sutta-piṭaka and the Vinaya-piṭaka at that time. Apart from this, the title *suttantika* "*sutta*-master" is also found. We also come across references to *bhaṇaka*s, "chanters of scripture". The last ruler of this dynasty, Devabhuti (70 BCE), was murdered at the hands of his minister Vasudeva who founded the Kaṇva dynasty. In spite of the undermining of Buddhism by Puṣyamitra Suṅga in the initial period, the religion flourished during the Suṅga-Kaṇva era through popular support as is evident from the large number of private donations. Bharhut stupa, the Karle caves and the Sanci stupa are the testimony of prosperity of Buddhism during this period.

Buddhism under the Satavahanas

Although there is no conclusive evidence concerning the origin of the Satavahanas, it is believed on the basis of the Puraṇas that the Satavahanas established their rule having defeated the Kaṇva Dynasty that succeeded the Suṅgas in Magadha, probably in the first century CE. The Puraṇas call the Satavahanas as Andhras, whose long history goes back to Vedic times. However, the inscriptions of the Satavahana Dynasty never refer to them as Andhras. The founder of this dynasty was Simuka. Though the Satavahana monarchs were followers of the Brahmanic faith they did patronize other religions, particularly Buddhism. One of the early rulers of this dynasty, King Kaṇha, had appointed a *mahamatra* to look after the well-being of the Buddhist Saṅgha. He had also a cave excavated at Nashik for the use of the Buddhist Saṅgha.

Nahapana kṣatrapa took control of all Satavahana possessions in northern India and the western Deccan. Usavadata, his son-in-law, donated land and coconut-groves and deposited money with guilds of artisans and traders with an arrangement that the proceeds of the land donations and the interest of the deposits should be used for the maintenance of the Saṅgha. This is the first instance on record of the Buddhist Saṅgha in India being endowed with resources for income for sustenance.

Gautamiputra made several fresh grants and more rights and privileges to the Saṅgha. Vasiṣṭhiputra Pulamavi (110-118 CE), his successor, also extended his patronage to Buddhism. Though there is no definite inscriptional evidence to show the relationship of the successors of Pulamavi with Buddhism, the large number of Buddhist monasteries and stupas constructed in the Satavahana rule may be assigned to the times of these later rulers. Two inscriptions from the Satavahana period, one from Kane and the other from Junnar, refer to the Dharmottariya sect, while a cave-inscription from Nashik, which belonged to the time of Vasiṣṭhiputra Pulamavi, records donations to the Bhadrayaniya sect. The Caitikas, or Caityavadakas, an off-shoot of the Mahasaṅghikas, are referred to in some cave-inscriptions at Nashik. As is evident from inscriptions from Nagarjunakoṇḍa, Amaravati, etc., the Mahasaṅghikas with their various sub-sects, spread into the southern and eastern parts of the Satavahana dominion. The sub-sects mentioned in these inscriptions are the Caityakas, the Rajagirinivasikas, the Bahusrutiyas, the Aparamahavanaseliyas, the Purvasailas and the Saiddhantikas. "The concentration of all these subdivisions of the Mahasaṅghikas in the Dhanyakaṭaka region clearly shows that it was a stronghold of this *nikaya*" (*Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Vol. VIII, Fasc. 1, 2, 3 Satavahanas, p. 4).

Buddhism under the Kuṣaṇas

Kaniṣka (first century CE) was the third Kuṣaṇa king in the succession who had invaded north-west India in the early part of that century. His empire stretched from Central Asia into Afghanistan as well as the north-western and northern parts of India. "A new movement in Buddhism, the Mahayana tradition, developed impressively under Kuṣāṇa rule" (Hirakawa 1993:232). In the same period, Buddhist sculptures came under the influence of Greek sculpture. This is evident from the Greek style of the facial expressions and the folds of the cloth portrayed in the carvings. Images of the Buddha first appeared in Gandhara and Mathura during the early part of the Kuṣaṇa Dynasty, i.e. during the last half of the first century CE.

Kaniṣka was a great patron of the Sarvastivada school of Buddhism, which flourished in the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province (now in Pakistan). An inscription found on the urn for relics that had been enshrined at the Kaniṣka-vihara states that the said vihara belonged to the Sarvastivada School. Another inscription on a small stupa found near Peshawar dated 148 CE mentions the donation of the enshrined relics of the Buddha to the Sarvastivadin School. The celebrated poet Asvaghoṣa, who was the author of epics such as the *Buddhacarita,* the *Saundarananda,* was at King Kaniṣka's court. He enjoys the same esteem among the northern Buddhists as King Asoka does among the southern Buddhists.

The Fourth Mahasaṅghika Council under the Patronage of King Kaniṣka

In the reign of King Kaniṣka, on the advice of the Ven. Parsva, a famous council was held under the leadership of the Ven. Vasumitra. According to one authority it was held in Jalandhar, and according to another, it was held in Kashmir. In this council, commentaries on the Suttapiṭaka, the Vinayapiṭaka and the Abhidhammapiṭaka were composed with the help of 500 monks, which were later engraved on sheets of copper and deposited inside a stupa. According to the Tibetan sources, the council was held to settle the dissensions among the Saṅgha and all the eighteen schools were acknowledged as "the repositories of the genuine doctrine" (B Jinananda 1997:42). Theravada Buddhists do not accept this council. According to the Pali sources, the fourth council was held in the reign of King Vaṭṭagami Abhaya (101-77 BCE.) of Sri Lanka in the Aluvihara at Matale wherein besides the canon, the texts of the Aṭṭhakathas were revised and recast and then put into writing on palm-leaves.

State of Buddhism under the Guptas

The Gupta Emperors (fourth to sixth centuries CE), who were Bhagavatas, were sympathetic towards Buddhism. There are records of a number of private donations to Buddhist monasteries during this period. The Chinese traveler Fa-hien describes the flourishing condition of Buddhism during the reign of Candragupta II: "All the earliest Mahayana sutras were composed in a Middle Indo-Aryan (MIA) language, which was later Sanskritized, probably under the impact of the Gupta Dynasty (c.320-540 CE) which adopted Sanskrit as its official language" (Skilton 1994:99). Asaṅga (310–390 CE) and Vasubandhu (320–400 CE) lived during the first years of the Gupta Dynasty (320–540 CE). During this dynasty, medieval Indian culture reached its peak within a peaceful and prosperous society which itself was considerably influenced by Buddhism. This period also witnessed the establishment of the Buddhist monastic university at Nalanda. Buddhist art and architecture at the Buddhist sites of Mathura, Sarnath, Naland, Ajanta, Bagh and Dhanyakaṭaka testify to the prosperity of Buddhism during this period.

In the middle of the sixth century CE, the Maitraka dynasty of western India patronized Buddhism and established the Buddhist monastery of Valabhi. In the seventh century CE, Emperor Harṣavardhana united India after a war lasting thirty-six years. He was said to be a follower of the Sammitiya School of the Hinayana in the early part of his life but became a Mahayanist during his later days. He patronized the Nalanda University and erected a vihara and a bronze temple there. He also erected stupas on the banks of the Gaṅga. During this period, Buddhism reached its peak as is shown in the records of Huen-tsang and many inscriptions of that period. The visit of Huen-tsang (630-644 CE) to India and his meeting with Harṣa is a notable event in Indian history. A century after Harṣa's rule, India witnessed a state of anarchy and Buddhism started receding in areas like Kashmir, Swat Valley, Valabhi and other places except in the east under the rule of the Palas.

Buddhism under the Palas

The Pala Dynasty of Bihar and Bengal (760–1142 CE) was a great patron of Buddhism. Gopala, the founder of the Dynasty established the monastery at Nalanda and also erected several monasteries in Bhaṁgala and Magadha. Great philosophers such as Santarakṣita flourished during the reign of Gopala. Dharmapala, his successor, constructed the Vikramasila monastery. He was the patron of the Buddhist commentator Haribhadra. Devapala, Dharmapala's successor, built the Somapuri monastery. His four successors, namely Surapala, Vigrahapala, Narayaṇapala, and Rajyapala were not staunch Buddhists. It appears that Buddhism was on a decline after Devapala, but a sign of revival is witnessed during the reign of Gopala II. Many of his inscriptions clearly reveal that he was a devout follower of Buddhism. In his fifteenth regnal year, a manuscript of the Aṣṭasahasrikaprajnaparamita was copied in the Vikramasila monastery. A palm leaf manuscript of the Maitreya Vyakaraṇa bears the date of the seventeenth year of Gopala's reign. Mahipala I (later part of the tenth century and the first half of the eleventh century CE) "restored the fallen fortunes of the dynasty and is hence regarded as its second founder" (Niyogi 1980:26). Inscriptions belonging to him bear the image of the Buddha. He undertook the task of repairing the old monasteries built by Dharmapala and Devapala. His devotion to Buddhism attracted some renowned scholars to his kingdom, such as Tilopada or Tilopa, Jnanaerimitra, Advayavajra, etc. The revival of Buddhism in Bengal by Mahipala I encouraged Tibetan monks. Nayapala, the successor of Mahipala I, was a contemporary of the great Buddhist scholar Atisa Dipaṁkara and had appointed the latter as the high priest of the Vikramasila monastery. However, in his official records the Buddha is not invoked. Nayapala's successor, Vigrahapala I, was a devout Buddhist. Some of his inscriptions were incised on the pedestals of the Buddha (Niyogi 1980:29). Ramapala, the next king of this dynasty, was also a patron of Buddhism. Scholars such as Abhayakaragupta of the Vikramasila monastery flourished during his reign. He was the founder of the Jagaddala monastery. The last influential Pala king was Madanapala whose inscriptions clearly reveal his faith in Buddhism. The newly established universities at Vikramasila and Odantapuri by the Pala Dynasty became centres for the Tantrayana. It was largely from here that Buddhism was taken to Tibet. This was the last Buddhist dynasty of pre-Muslim India.

Decline of Buddhism in India

Though the Muslim invasions of the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries were one of the key factors leading to the decline of Buddhism in India, there were several other factors as well that made Buddhism vulnerable to the impact of Islam.

The first and the foremost factor was an intermingling of Hindu and Buddhist ideas, which made a clear differentiation between them difficult for a common person. Dialogue between these two religions, which was an ongoing process for several centuries, "had served to refine their respective philosophies" (Skilton 1994:143); but it also made them more abstract and less easy for the common people. The development of the Tantrayana with a host of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas must have made Buddhism look like Hinduism with its pantheon of deities. The absorption of Buddhism by Hinduism has taken place as reflected in the acceptance of the Buddha as an incarnation of Viṣṇu by Hindus.

It appears that Buddhism had become a religion for specialists, especially monastic specialists. It became increasingly associated with centralized monastic learning while Hinduism remained based in villages. Thus Buddhists "were free from any immediate economic dependence on the communities around them through the cumulative effect of generous endowments from past lay followers and royal patrons" (Skilton 1994:144). This might have resulted in losing touch to some degree with popular culture. During the centuries preceding the Muslim invasion, Hinduism underwent a resurgence with the spread of Vaiṣṇavism in the south, Śaivism in Kashmir, and philosophers such as Śaṅkara gathering influential followings.

Finally, the royal patronage itself was ambiguous at times. The Nalanda University, which was heavily sponsored by Harṣa, was neglected by the Pala Dynasty. Instead it supported the monastic universities it had founded such as those of Vikramasila and Odantapuri. The beginning of the decline of Buddhism in India started in the eighth century when the Buddhist University at Valabhi was destroyed by Muslim invaders. Local Indian rulers could not achieve any successful alliance against the Muslim threat: they probably underestimated the danger they represented. Finally, in the twelfth century, in a decisive attack, Muslims extended their presence across the entire north of the subcontinent. Nalanda was destroyed in 1197, Vikramasila in 1203. Muslim historians have recorded that these universities were initially mistaken as fortresses. The central principle of non-violence in Buddhism "hindered any military defense on the part of the Buddhist communities" (Skilton 1994:145).

Buddhist Remnants

A Tibetan pilgrim, Dharmasvamin, found a monk called Rahulasribhadra teaching Sanskrit grammar to a handful of pupils in 1295 at Nalanda. Most refugees fled to Tibet or Burma or southern India. Largely unaffected by the Muslim invasions in the north, Buddhist institutions in southern India lasted for several more centuries. "There is evidence to show that Theravada Buddhism survived in Karnataka until at least the sixteenth century and Tamil Nadu until as late as the seventeenth century" (Skilton 1994:145).

In north, east and north-east India under the growing strength of Hinduism and Islam, Buddhism lost its distinct identity and accommodated many tenets of these two religions. In the Ladakh region, adjacent to the Kashmir valley and some regions of Himachal Pradesh, Tibetan Buddhism survived with some local modifications. In the east, in the state of West Bengal and the adjacent Chittagong hill tracts, smaller communities such as the Bauls, the Chakmas and the Baruas continued to practice Buddhism that was influenced by Hinduism in general and Vaiṣṇavism in particular. The same is the case of the Saraks of Orissa and other such remnant Buddhist communities of India.

In the Himalayan region of North-East India one can find remnant Buddhist populations primarily comprising of communities such as the Lepcha, Bhutia, Tamang and Newar, who follow the Tibetan form of Buddhism. Buddhists in the remaining part of North-East India, from the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Mizoram and Meghalaya, are mostly akin to Burma (Myanamar). However, as shown by Trevor Ling (1979:234), the Buddhist population of the north-east is mostly a result of migration and "very little, if any, of it can fairly be regarded as a surviving continuous tradition from the days before the decline of Indian Buddhism."

Some Important Places and Personalities

After the second council, South India became the home of the Mahasaṅghika offshoots, the Caityakas, the Purvasailas and the Uttarasailakas who flourished in the Andhra region. Sridhanyakaṭaka became the main seat of the Mahasaṅghika School. The place is also known as the motherland of Mantrayana Buddhism. In the later period, centres like Kancipuram, Amaravati and Nagarjunakoṇḍa assumed significance as seats of the Theravada and branches of the Mahasaṅghikas.

As mentioned before, in the reign of Satavahanas, Buddhism flourished in South India. The greatest contribution of the reign to Buddhism is the great personality Arya Nagarjuna, a friend of the Satavahana king Yajnasri Gautamiputra (166–196 CE). According to the biography of Nagarjuna translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva (405 CE), he was a native of South India. However, according to Huen-tsang, he belonged to South Kosala. He spent most of his life at Srisailam, which became a centre of Buddhism during his time. He was the founder of the Madhyamaka School. His prominent composition is the Mulamadhyamakakarika or the Madhyamikasastra with the auto-commentary the Akutobhaya and the Suhṛllekha, a letter to his friend Yajnasri Gautamiputra.

Another important luminary of this region is Diṅnaga, the founder of Buddhist logic. According to Tibetan sources, he was born in the Siṁhavaktra suburb of Kanchi in the south. His prominent works include the Pramaṇasamuccaya, the Nyayapravesa, the Hetucakraḍamaru, the Pramaṇasastranyayapravesa, and the Alambanaparikṣa. Diṅnaga forms "an important link between the Buddhist and the orthodox Nyaya systems of India" (Bharat Singh Upadhyaya 1997:198). Dharmakirti (seventh century CE), the successor of Diṅnaga. was born in Tirumalai in the Cola country of South India. He was a great logician of unsurpassed intelligence. His prominent works include the Pramaṇavarttika, the Pramaṇaviniscaya, the Nyayabindu, the Sambandhaparikṣa, the Hetubindu, the Vadanyaya and the Santanantarasiddhi.

From the fifth century onwards, southern India contributed three great scholars to Theravada Buddhism, Buddhadatta, Buddhaghosa and Dhammapala. Buddhadatta was a contemporary of Buddhaghosa but preceded him in Sri Lanka. He is said to have been a resident of Uragapur, the present Uraipur, in the kingdom of Cola (Ananda Kausalyayana 1997:185). After his return from Sri Lanka he composed the Abhidhammavatara, a summary of Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Abhidhammapiṭaka, and the Vinayavinicchaya, a summary of Buddhaghosa's commentary on the Vinayapiṭaka.

As proposed by Dharmananda Kosambi and believed in the Burmese tradition, Buddhaghosa came from South India (Ananda Kausalyayana 1997:188). This, however, does not agree with the records of the Mahavaṁsa, which describes him as a Brahmin from Bodhgaya, or the Buddhaghosuppatti, which describes him as a resident of Burma (Myanamar). Buddhaghosa's contribution to Theravada Buddhism and Pali literature is immense. During the reign of King Mahanama of Sri Lanka, he took upon the task of translating the Sinhala commentaries on the Tipiṭaka into Magadhi, i.e. Pali. Before going to Sri Lanka, he composed a text called Naṇodaya in Pali followed by a commentary on the Dhammasaṅgaṇi called the Aṭṭhasalini. In the Granthakara Pariveṇa of Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, under the supervision of the Mahavihara monks, Buddhaghosa composed texts such as the Visuddhimagga, a compendium of Buddhist philosophy; a commentary on the Vinayapiṭaka entitled Samantapasadika; the Sumaṅgalavilasini commentary on the Dighanikaya; the Papancasudani on the Majjhimanikaya; the Saratthappakasini on the Saṁyuttanikaya; the Manorathapuraṇi on the Aṅguttaranikaya; the Dhammapadaṭ hakatha and the Jatakaṭṭhakatha on the Dhammapada and the Jataka; the Paramatthajotika commentary on the Khuddakapaṭha and the Suttanipata; the Sammohavinodani commentary on the Vibhaṅga; and the Pancappakaraṇaṭṭhakatha commentary on the last five books of the Abhidhammapiṭaka.

Dhammapala, who also hailed from South India, lived in Badaratittha on the south-east coast of India. He has the credit of completing Buddhaghosa's unfinished work by composing commentaries on the remaining texts of the Khuddakanikaya. His commentary on the Udana, the Itivuttaka, the Vimanavatthu, the Petavatthu, the Theragatha, the Therigatha, and the Cariyapiṭaka is known as the Paramatthadipani. He also wrote a commentary on Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga called Paramatthamanjusa.

In the north, centres like Kausambi and Avanti, along with other prominent centres of the south-west, became the seat of Theravada, whereas places such as Mathura, Kashmir, and others in the north-west region became the seat of the Sarvastivada. In the east, Vaisali, Paṭaliputra and the rest developed as centres of the Mahasaṅghikas.

Among the great luminaries of this region, Asvaghoṣa stands foremost. A poet and a philosopher, Asvaghoṣa of Saketa was a contemporary of King Kaniṣka. He is said to have belonged to the Sarvastivada School. He is credited with the composition of the Buddhacarita, the Saundarananda, the Sariputraprakaraṇa and the Gaṇistotragatha.

Aryadeva (170-270 CE), an able successor of Nagarjuna (150-250 CE), composed ten works, of which the Catuḥsataka is the most important. It has been commented on twice by Candrakirti and by Dharmapala.

In the fourth century appeared Asaṅga (310-390 CE), the great master of the Yogacara School in the Gandhara region. He composed the Sravakabhumi and the Bodhisattvabhumi. His younger brother Vasubandhu (320–400 CE), who was initially a Sautrantika, turned Yogacarin in later days due to the influence of his brother. He composed the Abhidharmakosakarika together with the Bhaṣya when he was still a Sautrantika. He later authored the great treatises of the Vijnanavada such as the Triṁsika, the Viṁsika, the Vijnaptimatratasiddhi, etc.

Buddhapalita (470-540 CE) was the founder of the Prasaṅgika School of the Madhyamika philosophy. He was the author of the Mulamadhyamakavṛtti, which is preserved only in Tibetan. Bhavya or Bhavaviveka (490-570 CE) is said to have been the proponent of the Svatantrika School of the Madhyamika philosophy. He is the author of the Prajnapradipa, the Karatalaratna (extant only in Chinese), the Madhyamakahṛdaya, the Madhyamakaratnapradipa, and the Madhyamakarthasaṁgraha (extant in Tibetan).

Buddhapalita and Bhavaviveka were followed by another great luminary of the Madhyamaka School, Candrakirti (c. 650). The Prasannapada commentary on the Mulamadhyamakakarika of Nagarjuna, the Yuktiṣaṣṭiky, and the Pradipoddyotanaṭika on the Guhyasamajatantra are some of the most celebrated works of Candrakirti.

Santideva (650-750 CE), who also adopted the standpoint of the Madhyamika, composed texts like the Bodhicaryavatara, the Sikṣasamuccaya and the Sutrasamuccaya. The Bodhicaryavatara is an introduction to the practice of the Mahayana. There exist altogether nine commentaries/summaries of this important text composed of "high-spirited verses" (Nakamura 2007:288).

Santarakṣita (680-740 CE), a native of Gaur and the high priest of the monastery of Nalanda. was the author of the Tattvasaṁgraha. His disciple Kamalasila (700-750 CE) wrote the commentary Panjika on the Tattvasaṁgraha. These two are the noteworthy scholars who belong to the *nirakaravadi-Yogacara* School. This school is also known as the Yogacara-Madhyamika School.

Dipaṅkara Srijnana (980-1052 CE), better known in Tibet as Atisa, the greatest of the teacher-reformers of Tibetan Buddhism, was born in Bengal. He completed his study at the Vikramasila monastery. By the age of thirty-one he became a master of the three *piṭaka*s and the tantras. His most important work is the Bodhipathapradipa. His other equally famous works are the Caryagiti together with the auto-commentary Vṛtti, and the Vimalaratnalekha.

Besides these, many more great *acarya*s like Vasumitra, Yasomitra, Padmasambhava, Guṇaprabha, Abhayakaragupta, Jetari, Ratnakirti, Ratnakarasanti, and Jnanasrimitra contributed to the development of Buddhist thought in India and abroad.

State of Buddhist Education

The emergence of Buddhist education marks the overall revolution in the Indian educational system. In pre-Buddhist India, the Vedic education system was centered on individual teachers and the students used to stay at their teacher's house in order to study. Due to the small scale of these institutions and their dependence on a single teacher, they had many limitations. Cf. Mookerji quoted in S Dutt 1997:156: "Hence the latter [Buddhism] gave birth to those large-scale monastic universities, with thousands of teachers and students in the congregation, which during the last three to four centuries of Buddhism in India were famous all over Asia and attracted students from various parts of the continent."

Nalanda, Valabhi, Vikramasia, Jagaddala and Odantapuri were the prominent Buddhist universities that attracted a large number of students from India and abroad. The main sources of their information were early books of the Buddhist canon, Chinese and Tibetan records and colophons to the Chinese and the Tibetan manuscripts. The history of Buddhist education forms one aspect of the history of Buddhist monachism. From the first century CE, the monasteries seem to have started growing as seats of learning instead of remaining as mere shelters for monks. In this process, monasteries did not limit themselves to imparting teaching of the canonical texts but also began to teach tenets of other faiths, systems of philosophy and even agriculture and architecture. The admission to these educational institutions was open not only to monks of different sects of Buddhism but also to lay students and even non-Buddhists. These monastic institutions were funded by kings and wealthy merchants. With their rich infrastructure and libraries they attracted scholars within India and also from the neighboring Buddhist countries who were willing to learn and collect Buddhist scriptures, and proper rites and rituals. The records of three Chinese travelers Fa-hien (405-411 AD), Huen-tsang (629-646 AD) and I-tsing (671-695 AD) give us eyewitness account of these monasteries in the respective periods.

The Buddhist monastic university at Nalanda was established in the reign of King Kumaragupta I and remained a world center of Buddhist study up to the twelfth century CE. It was supported by Gupta kings such as Śakraditya, Buddhagupta, Tathagatagupta, Baladitya and Vajra followed by Harṣavardhana (606-647 CE) of Kanauj, Yasovarman and the first few Pala kings. As per the record of Huen-tsang, Nalanda was a fully-fledged university at this time with 1,500 teachers and about 10,000 students with an administrative system having a "full complement of schools of studies, lecture halls, libraries, regulations for admission and attendance at lectures, conduct and discipline (with prescribed penalties for a breach of these)" (S Dutt 1997:164). We find glorious descriptions of the manuscripts in the library of Nalanda comprising of three multi-storied buildings bearing the names Ratnodadhi (Sea of Jewels), Ratnasagara (Ocean of Jewels) and Ratnaranjaka (Jewel-adorned). The students had a choice of various subjects – Buddhist and non-Buddhist, sacred and secular. Nalanda became popular for its Schools of Discussion. "The uninhibited scope and freedom of the discussions at Nalanda and also at all other monastic universities must be counted as a great contributory factor in that process of fusion of Brahmanical and Buddhist thought and culture which makes it so intriguing a feature of the final period of the history of ancient Indian culture" (S Dutt 1997:166). The University of Nalanda reached its glory in the reign of Śri Harṣa in the seventh century CE. Its glory started to decline with the preeminence of the Vikramasila monastery established by the Pala kings.

Another important monastic university was that of Valabhi in western India, a centre of Hinayana studies. Both Huen-tsang and I-tsing mention it as an important centre of Buddhist learning during the sixth and seventh centuries.

Another university which acquired prominence in the declining days of Nalanda was the Vikramasila University, situated on the bank of the Ganges, established and supported by the Pala kings. King Ramapala (1084-1130 CE) of the Pala Dynasty established another famous university of Jagaddala in his capital Ramavati. Though it flourished for only around a hundred years, it produced many learned scholars. Another important university was that of Odantapuri, which, though it existed before the Palas, flourished during their reign.

The history of Buddhist education shows a transformation from the education for self-training in search of true knowledge to education that gave rise to the scholarship necessary for its engagement with the outside world. The great Buddhist monasteries not only brought glory to Indian Buddhism but were also responsible for spreading its light among the neighboring countries, particularly China and Tibet.

"The Indian Universities and their Tibetan counterparts stressed a synthesizing approach to Buddhism, in which an attempt was made to categorize and incorporate all previous doctrines and practices, reconciling all differences in a universal system that covered all aspects of the Dharma-Vinaya. Grasping this synthesis in its entirety required an encyclopaedic knowledge of the sutras and sastras, or treatises, for which a training lasting many years was needed. Since the sutras themselves were so apparently contradictory and thereby resistant to synthesis, they had of necessity to be approached by way of the commentaries and treatises of the great *acaryas,* or teachers" (Skilton 1994:183).

Buddhist Art and Architecture

Buddhist art and architecture witnessed a phenomenal growth after the reign of Asoka, i.e. third century BCE. Their origin can be traced back to the time of the Buddha when there are references to the vihara and the stupa architecture and their decoration with simple design. Cf. the Senasanakkhandhaka p. 271 ff of the Cullavagga, Vinayapiṭaka.

The worship of a stupa is an important element of early Buddhist religious practice. Stupas are basically memorials erected on the relics of the Buddha or his prominent disciples. These are called *sarira stupa*s. Besides this, there are two more types of stupas, viz. *uddesika* "votive" and *paribhogika,* "those built on the objects used by the Buddha or his disciples," like the robe, the bowl, and sticks.

The first eight *sarira stupa*s built on the mortal remains of the Buddha after his *parinirvaṇa* are in Rajagṛha, Vaisali, Kapilavastu, Allakappa, Ramagrama, Vethadipa, Pava and Kusinara. Besides these, there were two more stupas erected by Brahmin Droṇa and the Mauryas of Pippalivana along with those built on the tooth relics of the Buddha at Gandhara and Kaliṅga and one each in the heaven and the world of Nagas. The Chinese travelers such as Fa-hien and Huen-tsang and the Sinhalese chronicle Dipavaṁsa speak of a number of *paribhogikastupa*s built over various objects used by Gautama the Buddha and the previous Buddhas in places like Nagara, Peshawar, and Koṅkaṇapura in South India. The earliest known brick stupa (450 BCE) is at Piprawha on the Nepal border, which indicates the antiquity of brick architecture as compared to stone architecture. Its earlier developed form can be seen in the brick stupa at Sanci built in the Asokan era. The earlier stupa structure with a circular or a square base (*vedika*) supporting a hemispherical dome (*aṇḍa*) surmounted by a pavilion (*harmika*) having a shaft (*daṇḍa*) rising at the top with an umbrella (*chatra*) underwent a number of changes in the course of time in various regions as is evident in the stupas found in China, Sri Lanka, Java and Burma. The stone railings found at many places such as Bodh Gaya and Amaravati are imitations of wooden balustrades indicating the antiquity of wooden architecture over that of stone.

Sculptures and bronzes are other objects of worship. The lion capital of the Asokan era (third century BCE) along with sculptures on the railings and gateways of stupas at Sanci and Bharhut testify the glorious history of Buddhist sculptures. Mathura was the first important school of Indian sculpture which is well-known for its statuary and beautiful figure structure. This school reached its peak in the Gupta age. The Buddha figures at Sarnath, Mathura and Ajanta are excellent specimens of Mathura art.

With the rise of the Kuṣaṇas (second century CE) in the north-west we find the emergence of another great school of the Buddhist art, that of Gandhara. The ivory carvings of the Begram are an important chapter of this art. The commonalities shared between the Gandhara art of Begram and the Mathura art at Mathura, Sanci, Nagarjunakoṇḍa and Amaravati hint at a common heritage of the two art schools. It is believed that by way of Suṅgas it developed into the Gandhara School at the time of Kuṣaṇas in the north and through Satavahanas into the Mathura School in the south (C Sivaramamurti 1997:257). Some of the early Buddha images with a Greco-Roman influence belong to the Gandhara school. The image of the ascetic Buddha, almost skin and bone, is the masterpiece of Gandhara art along with the sculptures of the new-born Siddhartha, Vajrapaṇi and two colossal figures of the Buddha at Bamiyan. "Presentation of the physical form with its great emphasis on anatomy" (C Sivaramamurti 1997:257) is the salient feature of this school. The influence of Gandhara art can be found in the indigenous art of south, east and north India fusing with the Mathura school.

From the second century CE onwards, one can find bronze images of the Buddha. "Bronzes of the Gupta period rank with the best stone sculptures…" (TN Ramachandran 1997:251). The bronze images of the Pala period are well-known for their elegant form and spiritual expression. Besides leaving a great mark on Indian education, Nalanda also earned high repute for its black slate sculpture and bronzes. Influence of Nalanda art can be witnessed in Java, Nepal, and Burma. Though eastern India has a rich tradition of bronze images, they are rarely found in the south India. There are a few bronzes found in Tanjore belonging to the tenth to fifteenth centuries CE. Some bronze images belonging to the early (871-1070 CE) and later (1070-1250 CE) Cola period are also found in the viharas of Nagapattinam. The Buddhist art of Amaravati which developed as a centre of Hinayana Buddhism in the second and third century CE and Nagarjunakoṇḍa exerted great influence on the Buddhist art of Sri Lanka, Thailand and Sumatra.

The earliest surviving frescos can be found at Ajanta dating back to the second century BCE. However, it was once again in the reign of the Guptas (fifth to sixth centuries CE) that the art of painting reached its culmination. Testimony to this fact can be found in the paintings of Ajanta and Bagh. These paintings mostly depict incidences from the life of the Buddha or the Jataka tales. During the Pala period there developed the art of miniature painting specially for the purpose of embellishing manuscripts. These included mostly the figures of Buddhist gods and goddesses. The influence of Ajanta and Bagh paintings can be found in the art of Bamiyan in Central Asia, Kizil in Chinese Turkestan and Tun-huang and Shansi-Hope in China. Thus, the Buddhist art in the form of stupa construction, sculptures, bronzes and paintings has not only enriched Buddhism in India but also in the world outside.

Development of Buddhist Ideology

Early Buddhist Schools

The causes of the development of a number of Buddhist sects and schools can be traced back to the Buddha's lifetime. There was opposition to the Buddha and his ideology in his lifetime, sometimes due to the adherence of stricter rules in a monk's life as in the case of Devadatta, sometimes due to inherent tendencies of transgressing the rule as in the case of the Chabbaggiyas, sometimes due to the desire to lead an comfortable life as in the case of Subhadda, who celebrated freedom from the ethical conduct taught by the Buddha. The Buddha's decision not to appoint any single person as the successor of his Order and to place the entire authority into the Dhamma and the Vinaya, and at the same time providing a mechanism to determine the authenticity of the statement and encouragement to question as a means to seek the truth. One may add to this list of reasons "common interests arising from personal attachment to certain persons or groups of persons, or created by various causes, such as association, studies, geographical regions, as well as honest differences of opinion" (PV Bapat 1997:87). As mentioned before, the Second Council gave rise to the two primitive Buddhist sects called the Sthaviravadins and the Mahasaṅghikas as a result of doctrinal and disciplinary differences. These two schools gave rise to a number of sub-sects ultimately reaching eighteen by the time of the Third Council. Out of them, eleven arose from the Sthaviravada whereas seven arose from the Mahasaṅghika.

Theravada Ideology

It is generally believed that the early teachings of the Buddha are found in the Pali canon of the Theravada, which accepts the Buddha as a historic figure having human characteristics occasionally showing some superhuman qualities. The Theravada teaching is simple and is summarized into a stanza occurring in the Dhammapada (verse 183) saying that "not performing evil, accumulation of merit and purification of one's own mind is the teaching of the Buddha."[3] This threefold teaching is accomplished by threefold training in morality (*sila*), concentration (*samadhi*) and understanding (*panna*). The training in morality comprises of avoidance of the ten-fold evil conduct of body, speech and mind; observance of ten moral precepts comprising of abstinence from killing, stealing, sexual misbehavior, false speech, untimely eating and all other modes of comfortable and luxurious life that may distract the mind. The training in concentration comprises of developing a balanced state of mind with the help of one of the forty prescribed objects of meditation in order to get a clear vision of the real nature of things. The training in understanding comprises of discerning the threefold character of the world, the four noble truths and the principle of Dependent Origination necessary for realizing the interdependent and impermanent nature of phenomena leading to disenchantment and detachment.

According to this philosophy, the world has three characteristics: that of being impermanent (*anicca*); consequently, being unsatisfactory (*dukkha*); and unsubstantial (*anatta*). This provides the necessary reason for the cultivation of detachment towards worldly phenomena. According to this philosophy, the human personality is made up of mind (*nama*) and matter (*rupa*). It can also be analyzed into the totality of five constituent factors (*khandha*), viz. material body, sensations, perceptions, volitions and cognition. This school analyses the world of human experience into twelve gateways (*ayatanas*) or eighteen elements (*dhatus*). The twelve gateways include six sense faculties or bases (*vatthu*), viz. the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body or the skin and the mind and their respective objects (*alambana*). The analysis into elements further includes six-fold respective consciousness (*vinnaṇa*) to the list of twelve *ayatanas*. Thus, according to PV Bapat (1997:91), "this most orthodox school of Buddhism has a pluralistic conception of the constituent elements of the universe." The doctrines of this school were clearly spelt out and designated as the Vibhajyavada in the Third Council held at Paṭaliputta.

According to the Theravada Abhidhamma, mind (*citta*), mental factors (*cetasikas*), material factors (*rupa*) and the happy state free from craving (*nibbana*) are the four ultimate categories essential for spiritual development. Clear understanding of them helps the practitioner realize the impermanent, interdependent, and non-substantial nature of the world, which makes it highly unsatisfactory. Knowing that ignorance of and craving for such worldly phenomena is the main cause of suffering one is inspired to strive for freedom from them. The eightfold perfect mode of practice comprising the three-fold training into morality, concentration and understanding is the right means to achieve this goal. The person who has attained this goal is called an *arhat* "the deserving one", who is an ideal person for this school.

The Theravada school differed from the major Hinayana doctrines proposed by the Mahisasakas and the Sarvastivadins. The Mahisasakas did not accept the past and the future dharmas as real. They rejected the state of the *antarabhava*, "an interim existence". They proposed the exclusion of Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood from the Noble Eightfold Path as essential factors for Enlightenment. According to them, Arhats were not subject to retrogression, but the *srotapannas*, "stream enterers", are. They believed that neither *devas* nor heretics could win miraculous powers. However, later Mahisasakas differed from them and were more close to the Sarvastivadins in their ideology.

Sarvastivadins, whose canon is in Sanskrit, differed from the early Mahisasakas. This school accepted existence of the dharmas in all the three times. Thus, like the Sthaviravadins they are also called realists. According to them, an arhat is subject to retrogression whereas the *srotopanna*, "a stream enterer", is not. They denied transcendent powers ascribed to the Buddha by the Mahasaṅghikas. They believed that devas and heretics can assume supernatural powers. They also accepted their interim existence. For them, Bodhisattvas are also ordinary people and arhats are not free from the effects of past actions. Sarvastivadins were also pluralists like the Sthaviravadins. The Sarvastivada Abhidharma accepted seventy-five dharmas comprising rupa, citta, forty-six *cittasamprayuktadharmas*, "mental concomitants", fourteen *cittaviprayukta dharmas*, "dharmas not connected with mind", and three *asaṁskṛta dharmas* "unconditioned states". The class of *cittasamprayuktadharmas* "mental concomitants" is a contribution of the Sarvastivadins. The followers of this school are also called Hetuvadins because of the importance of causality in this school.

Another important school is that of Vatsiputriyas, who were also known as the Avantikas, proposed the doctrine of the *pudgala* based on some canonical passages where the word *pudgala* occurs. According to them, *pudgala* is neither the same nor different from the *skandhas* and without accepting it, the explanation of rebirth is not possible. Vasubandhu rejected this theory in the last chapter of his Abhidharmakosa. This school was patronized by Harṣa's (seventh century CE) sister Rajyasri.

According to the Saṅkrantivadins "Proponents of transmigration", who are said to be either the predecessors or the same as the Sautrantikas,[4] the subtle consciousness, which is identical with the *alaya-vijnana* of the Yogacarins and transmigrates from one life to another. They also accepted, like the Mahayanists, the potential of Buddhahood existing in every person. "On account of such views his (*sic* this) school is considered to be a bridge between the Sravakayana often, though not justifiably, called the Hinayana and the Mahayana" (PV Bapat 1997:96).

Mahayana Ideology

The Mahasaṅghikas are said to be the forerunners of the Mahayana. This school became popular throughout the east of India, the place of its inception, and the south. The Caityakas, the Sailas or Andhakas, and the Bahusrutiyas are the important offshoots of this school. The literature of this school was in Prakrit.[5] They are said to have included in their canon a number of sutras, which they believed to be the words of the Buddha. They excluded from their canon some discourses along with the Parivara, the Abhidhamma, the Paṭisambhida, the Niddesa and parts of the Jataka, which otherwise formed part of the Theravada canon for not being the direct teachings of the Buddha. They revised the rules of Vinaya and added some new rules, revolutionizing the Buddhist Saṅgha.

According to the Lokottaravadin School of the Mahasaṅghikas, the Buddhas are supra-mundane and are not truly connected with worldly life. This doctrine of the supra-mundane Buddha gave rise to the Mahayana ideology of Trikaya. According to them, Bodhisattvas are also supra-mundane. They taught that the Arhat-hood is not the final stage of perfection. This school believed that the original consciousness is pure and is tainted by foreign defilements. This idea is said to be the precursor of the Yogacara ideal of the pure *alayavijnana,* "storehouse of pure consciousness". The Mahasaṅghikas' propagation of the Caitya worship, donations and ideas such as transferring merit to the desired led to the popular form of Buddhism akin to the Mahayana school.

The Mahayana emerges as a definable movement in the first century BCE with the appearance of a new class of literature called the Mahayana sutras. The main philosophical tenet of the Mahayana is that all things are empty, or devoid of self-nature (*sunyata*). Its chief religious ideal is the Bodhisattva, which supplanted the earlier ideal of an arhat, and is distinguished from it by the vow to postpone entry into *nirvaṇa* (although meriting it) until all other living beings are similarly enlightened and saved.

The Madhyamika School

This school propounded by Nagarjuna (150-250 CE) got its name as it proposed the Middle Way of relativity between the two extremes of existence and non-existence, eternalism and non-eternalism (*sasvatavada* and *ucchedavada*). However, as pointed out by AC Banerjee (1997:106), "the middle path propounded at Banaras has an ethical meaning, while that of the Madhyamikas is a metaphysical system." The Doctrine of Sunyata, "Emptiness", is the core doctrine of this school. It refers to the principle of dependent arising (*pratityasamutpada*), which is beyond the duality of origination and cessation, eternity and annihilation, singularity and plurality, coming-in and going-out.[6] On account of this doctrine of *sunyata* the school is also known as the Sunyavada. In order to account for this non-dualism, this school proposed the scheme of two truths: *saṁvṛti,* "conventional", and *paramartha,* "ultimate". "The former refers to ignorance or delusion which envelops reality and gives a false impression, while the latter is the realization that worldly things are non-existent like an illusion or an echo" (AC Banerjee 1997:107). From the relative point of view, Pratityasamutpada explains worldly phenomena at the *saṁvṛti* level and absolute non-origination from the *paramartha* level. This school developed into two major branches of the *Prasaṅgika* and the *Svatantrika* based on their method of argumentation as the former followed the method of *reductio ad absurdum* whereas the latter adopted independent reasoning. Dialectics was at the core of these schools. Buddhapalita was the propounder of the Prasaṅgika school whereas Bhavaviveka was the propounder of the latter.

The Yogacara School

The school of the Yogacara doctrine developed under the great masters such as Maitreyanatha (third century CE), Asaṅga (fourth century CE), Vasubandhu (fourth century CE), Sthiramati (fifth century CE), Diṅnaga (fifth century CE), Dharmapala (seventh century CE), Dharmakirti (seventh century CE), Śantarakṣita (eighth century CE) and Kamalasila (eighth century CE). The school is called Yogacara by Asaṅga due to the importance it gives to the practice of meditation as the means of salvation. It is also called the Vijnanavada by Vasubandhu due to the acceptance of the Vijnaptimatra or Cittamatra, "nothing but consciousness", as the ultimate reality. It teaches subjective idealism or the theory that only thought is real. For this school, the external objects do not exist in reality and are mere mental projections. Whatever appears in a mental stream has a threefold nature (*trisvabhava*): *parikalpita,* "mentally constructed", *paratantra* "dependent on causes and conditions" and *parinispanna* "conclusive". However, as there are no external objects according to this school, one cannot really talk about their nature. They are rather to be understood as the three aspects of consciousness responsible for the mental projection of the external world. The *parikalpita* aspect constructs the non-existing object, the *paratantra* is responsible for its cognition due to certain causes and conditions whereas the *parinispanna* brings about the understanding that the external object is unreal and mere consciousness is real. This school introduced the concept of *alayavijnana* to account for the subject-object duality. This stream of consciousness holds the seeds of subjective and objective phenomena. For this school, realization of the non-substantiality of an individual (*pudgalanairatmya*) and that of phenomena (*dharmanairatmya*) is necessary for the attainment of liberation.

The Tantrayana

Traditionally, it is believed that the teaching of the Vajrayana or the Mantrayana is given by the Buddha in the Second Turning of the Wheel when he simultaneously preached the Paramitayana or the Bodhisattvayana at the Gṛdhrakuṭa Mountain and the Vajrayana or the Mantrayana at Śridhanyakaṭaka.[7] Attainment of Buddhahood in this life is the principle doctrine of the Vajrayana, which believes that through the skillful application of mental defilements one can achieve freedom from them. Therefore, the Tantric practice is basically the practice of transformation of defilements into the means to liberation. Such a concept and mode of practice is also available in other Indian tantric schools. The Tantrayana accepted many deities of different forms. Here, the Buddhas appear with their consorts. The Buddha symbolizes the masculine nature (*puruṣatattva*) whereas his consort symbolizes the feminine nature (*stritattva*). The realization of their unity is referred to as the realization of the ultimate truth. In the Tantrayana practice, the aspirant aims at attaining the state of Buddhahood, which is equivalent to the state of Vajrasattva. Here, *vajra* signifies *sunyata* and *sattva* is pure knowledge. The identity between these two is said to be the state of Vajrasattva. The practice of the Vajrayana involves various types of imagination. Due to the mystical nature of this path, there is much scope for fraud and corruption. Hence the practice of the Tantra has provided a mechanism for judging the disciple as well as the master. Thereafter, a disciple is supposed to prepare himself for the Tantric initiation called *abhiṣeka* by practicing moral restraints of *pratimokṣa*, *bodhisattva* and *tantra* in succession. A tantric practitioner is then asked to meditate on a tantric figure called *maṇḍala* which represents the universe with the Buddha at its centre. Concentrating on this *maṇḍala* he imagines himself to be the Buddha and ultimately realizes the ultimate form of the Buddha. This process is called the *utpannakrama*. However, this projected image of the excellent Buddha disappears in a moment providing the practitioner the realization of *sunyata* "emptiness". This is called the *niṣpannakrama.* As this realization takes place in a moment, it is also called the Jhaṭitiyoga, "the instantaneous Yoga". The Buddhist tantras can be classified into four: the Kriyatantra, the Caryatantra, the Yogatantra and the Yoganuttaratantra. The Kriyatantras and the Caryatantras mainly focus on rituals and chanting whereas the other two tantras focus on the meditative practice that unites the Buddha and the *prajna.* Realization of this union is called the *mahasukha* or the *sahajasukha.* Tantric Buddhism threw its doors open for practitioners belonging to different classes, castes and professions. It also gave equal importance to women tantric masters. The Guhyasamajatantra, the Hevajratantra, the Saṁvarodayatantra, the Yoginitantra, the Kalacakratantra are some of the important texts of Tantra. These texts crossed the border of India and became popular in Tibet, China and Japan and were translated into languages of these countries. This sect has exerted a great influence on the culture of these countries in terms of sculpture, painting, etc. The later Indian traditions of Nathas, Siddhas and Sahajiyas are closely related to the Buddhist tantrism.

The State of Buddhism at Present

Return of Buddhism to India

Eleanor Zelliot in her article *The Indian Rediscovery of Buddhism, 1855 to 1956* (1979: 389-406) describes the revival of Buddhism in India from the point of scholarship, active participation in Buddhism, and popularization and revival among Buddhist remnants. According to Zelliot, India's renewed interest in Buddhism in the middle of the nineteenth century and the living example of scholars, who were also active Buddhists, made the latter low caste conversion possible. The beginning of this process of rediscovery is marked by the contribution of eminent scholars such as Rajendralal Mitra (1824-91), Hara Prasad Shastri, and Sarat Chandra Das. Rajendralal Mitra published nineteen articles and books from 1855 to 1889, a period when Indians knew little of Buddhism. His main interest was living Buddhism in the north of India with its neglected Sanskrit texts. Hara Prasad Shastri wrote about sixty books and articles. He was the first to discover the survival of the living Buddhism in India. Sarat Chandra Das made a valuable contribution to the religion and the history of Tibet. He published around fifty articles and books. Although this initial work was related to Sanskrit texts, by the end of the century there arose a realization that Buddhist scholarship cannot be complete without the study of Pali. Ashutosh Mookerji, the member of the Maha Bodhi Society instituted Pali at the University of Calcutta. Satish Chandra Vidyabhushan became the first MA in Pali in 1901. He then published Kaccayana's Pali grammar in the Devanagari script along with an English translation. Pali was instituted in the University of Bombay in 1909.

Popular writing on Buddhism played an important role in insuring the participation of people in Buddhism. In western India, people like Krishnarao Arjun Keluskar and Vinayak Kondadev Oka published books in Marathi, whereas in the east Rabindranath Tagore wrote on Buddhist themes in Bangla. Besides popular writing, personal experience of Buddhism in the case of people like Mahavira, a close relative of Kunwar Singh, one of the Bihari leaders in the Indian revolt of 1857, and Dharmananda Kosambi, played an important role in this revival. These experiences were responsible for the initial individual conversions into Buddhism by the end of the nineteenth century.

The Bengali Buddhist revival in the Chittagong hill area began in the year 1856 during the visit of a Burmese monk, Saramedha, who taught the Theravada Buddhism for two years. He also converted Queen Kalindi of the Chakma kingdom. She later played an important role in the revival of Buddhism by financing the first Buddhist publication. Bhikkhu Acariya Punnasara discovered Theravada Buddhism in Calcutta. This first Theravada monk from the Bengali community "ordained a new generation of Bengali bhikkhus, established schools and a Pili Tol, and set in motion a wide range of religious reforms which affected a large part of the Buddhist community" (Eleanor Zelliot 1979:394). Another Bengali bhikkhu, Kripasaran Mahathera, joined the Maha Bodhi Society to urge the study of Pali at the Calcutta University. Under the leadership of these two bhikkhus, the old Bengali Buddhist community began to participate in the Buddhist revival. Thereafter, scholars like BM Barua who established the Nalanda Vidyabhavan in Calcutta for the teaching of Pali and Buddhology and wrote important books on the history of pre-Buddhist Indian philosophy as well as inscriptional and archaeological material, contributed extensively to the field of Buddhist studies.

The Buddhist revival in north India was led by Bodhanand Mahasthavir (1874-1952), formerly Mukund Prakash, who came from a Bengali Brahmin family. He was initially attracted to Christianity, but became a Buddhist after a meeting with Buddhists monks from Ceylon at a Theosophical conference in Varanasi. He later lived in Lucknow where he came in contact with Barua Buddhists. In 1914, he received his ordination from Kripasaran Mahathera in Calcutta. He began preaching Buddhism in Lucknow and advocated the same for Dalits. He founded the *Bharatiya Buddha Samiti* in 1916, and set up a vihara in 1928. In his book *Mula Bharatavasi aur Arya* ("Original Inhabitants of India and Aryans"), Mahathera stated that the *sudra*s were the original inhabitants of India, who were enslaved by the Aryans. Bodhanand Mahasthavir wrote another book on Buddhist rituals called *Bauddha Dinacarya*. His associate, Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu, founded the *Bahujan Kalyan Prakashan*. The two co-authored a book on the life and teaching of the Buddha. Bodhanand Mahasthavir had contacts with Dr BR Ambedkar. His followers actually participated in Dr Ambedkar's Republican Party of India.

Another person worth mentioning in this context is Acharya Ishvardatt Medharthi (1900-1971) of Kanpur. He also supported the cause of the Dalits. He studied Pali and Buddhist scripture at Gurukul Kangri. He was initiated into Buddhism by Gyanketu (1906-1984) and Lokanath in 1937 in Sri Lanka. In the same year, Lokanath published a pamphlet *Buddhism Will Make You Free*, dedicated to the Depressed Classes of India from his press in Ceylon. Although Medharthi heavily criticized the Indian caste-system, he did not criticize Hinduism. He claimed that the Dalits (Adi Hindus, i.e. the original Hindus) were the ancient rulers of India and had been trapped into slavery by the Aryan invaders. He also claimed that the Sanatana dharma, "the eternal religion", was the religion of Adi Hindus, and tried to reconcile Buddhism with the philosophy of Indian saints. He established the Buddhapuri school in Kanpur. In the 1940s, Acharya Ishvardatt Medharthi had close contacts with Dr Ambedkar who is said to have visited his Buddhapuri School during this period. Medharthi also gave classes in Pali to Dr Ambedkar at his residence in Delhi. After retiring in 1960, Medharthi spent rest of his life following the Arya-Samaj ideals.

Bhoj Dev Mudit, an associate of Medharthi converted to Buddhism in 1968 and established his own Buddhist school. Another name in the Buddhist revival movement is that of Bhikkhu Uttama of Kanpur. He was an avid supporter of the Arya Samaj and the *Jat Pat Toḍak Manḍal*, the anti-caste wing of the Arya Samaj.

The revival of Buddhism in South India followed a different pattern from that of North India. It "seems more oriented to conversion than scholarship" (E. Zelliot 1979:394). South India, however, did produce scholars such as S Krishnaswami Aiyangar, VR Ramachandra Dikshitar, HR Rangaswamy Iyengar, TN Ramachandran, N Aiyaswami Sastri and KR Subramanian who worked on various aspects of Buddhist studies. Before these scholars, AS Mudaliyar published a pamphlet on Buddhism in 1903.

Iyothee Thass or Pandit C Ayodhya Das (1845-1914), a Tamil Siddha physician and an untouchable, was the pioneer of the Tamil Buddhist movement. He founded the Sakya Buddhist Society in 1890, which is also known as the Indian Buddhist Association. The first president of the Indian Buddhist Association was Paul Carus, the author of *The Gospel of Buddha* (1894). Iyothee Thass argued that Tamil Dalits were originally Buddhists, aview that was also upheld by P Lakshmi Narasu and Dr Ambedkar. He led a delegation of prominent Dalits to meet Henry Steel Olcott and sought his help in the re-establishment of Tamil Buddhism. Olcott helped Thass to visit Sri Lanka, where in 1897 he received initiation from Bhikkhu Sumangala Nayake. After returning to India, Thass, together with PL Narasu, established the *Sakya Buddhist Society* in Madras with branches in many places including Karnataka. Thass established a weekly magazine called *Oru Paisa Tamizhan* ("One Paisa Tamilian") in Chennai in 1907. It served as a newsletter linking all the new branches of the Sakya Buddhist Society. The magazine discussed traditions and practices of Tamil Buddhism, new developments in the Buddhist world, and the Indian subcontinent's history from the Buddhist point of view.

PL Narasu, "a Buddhist and a writer and a missionary in the cause of Buddhism" (E Zelliot 1979:395), opened a branch of the Maha Bodhi Society in Madras. For a short period, he managed a school hall for Dravidian Buddhist children and also maintained a residence for Buddhist bhikkhus. He wrote an important book *The Essence of Buddhism* in 1907 with an introduction by Anagarika Dharmapala. It was published again in 1948 with a preface by Dr Ambedkar. The book's emphasis is on the social aspect of Buddhism. Narasu propagated Buddhism as superior to other contemporary religions and converted around 3,000 people by 1920 (E Zelliot 1979:395). Narasu proposed that at least some untouchables had been Buddhists in an earlier age, a theme which Dr. Ambedkar developed in his works such as *The Untouchables* and *Who were the Shudras?*

Annadurai, a Tamil untouchable, was instrumental in starting a Buddhist movement in the state of Karnataka. Buddhism in Kerala was also primarily a lower caste phenomenon. Buddhism in an organized form was reestablished in Calicut in 1924 with the help of the Maha Bodhi Society. It was dominated by members of the low class Izhava caste. C Krishnan, an Izhava, became a Buddhist in the 1920s and established the Maha Bodhi temples. He campaigned strenuously for Buddhism in the 1930s and was joined by Dharmaskandha, the first Malyali bhikkhu. "The Census for Cochin in 1931 noted ninety-six Buddhists, most of them educated Malyali Izhavas 'disgusted with the social disabilities to which their caste is subjected within the Hindu fold'" (E Zelliot 1979:395).

The late 1920s and the 1930s witnessed a rise in Buddhist scholarship in India. These scholars include PV Bapat, who served in the University of Pune and Delhi, CV Joshi, a professor at the University of Baroda, NK Bhagvat, a professor at the University of Mumbai along with CV Rajwade, GR Nandargikar, VV Gokhale, PLVaidya, JK Nariman from western India, particularly the state of Maharashtra. The names of the scholars RG Bhandarkar and KV Pathak also deserve special attention. From the eastern part of the country there were scholars like PC Bagchi, who served as the vice-chancellor of the Vishva Bharati University, Binaytosh Bhattacharya, who headed the Gayakwad Institute at Baroda, Vidhushekhar Bhattacharya or Vidhushekhar Shastri, who was connected with both the Shantiniketan and Calcutta University, Nalinaksha Dutt, who headed the department of Pali at the Calcutta University, Sukumar Dutt, UN Ghoshal, and BC Law.

Besides these scholars, there were people who popularized Buddhism during the first half of the twentieth century. Important among them were AL Nair, a medical doctor in Bombay, who established the Buddha Society in 1922, built the Ananda Vihara and published a journal called the *Buddha Prabha*, KA Padhye, who was the editor of the journal after Nair, and AR Kulkarni, an advocate from Nagpur. They treated Buddhism as a higher form of Hinduism. During the same period, social reformers like VR Shinde were attracted towards Buddhism, even though they did not formally become Buddhists. Another important figure in the field of popular literature was Hari Singh Gaur, a lawyer, a member of the Central Legislative Assembly for fourteen years and the vice-chancellor of Nagpur University, who published some light articles and a book on Buddhism. These scholars and popularizers did not treat Buddhism as distinct from Hinduism. It was looked upon as a purer form of Hinduism and its culture the highest point of Indian civilization. Another three important figures in this line are: Pandit Shiv Narain of Lahore, who wrote articles in the journal of the Maha Bodhi Society on the glory of Buddhism and donated his library to the International Buddhist Institute at Sarnath; KP Jayaswal, who cared for the manuscripts brought by Rahula Sankrityayana and wrote a number of articles on Buddhism; and Har Dayal, a Punjabi, who studied Buddhism in the US and at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, and wrote a book on the Bodhisattva doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit literature, in which declared Buddhism as the peak of ancient Indian civilization.

The contributions of some important personalities, who were responsible for the present revival of Buddhism in India, need to be described in more detail.

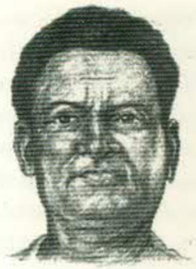
Contribution of Anagarika Dharmapala

Anagarika Dharmapala, a Sri Lankan Buddhist missionary, was born into an aristocratic family in 1864. The mission of his life was to re-establish the lost glory of Buddhism, its holy places and ideas. He founded the Maha Bodhi Society first in Sri Lanka in 1891 and then in India. The prime objectives of the society were to maintain a staff of bhikkhus at Bodh Gaya from various Asian countries and to publish Buddhist literature in English and Indian languages. In 1892, Anagarika Dharmapala started a journal called *The Maha Bodhi and the United Buddhist World* following an International Buddhist Conference to bring to the notice of the Buddhist world the miserable state of affairs of the Maha Bodhi temple at Bodh Gaya. In 1900, branches of the society were opened at Madras, Kusinagara and Anuradhpura (Sri Lanka). In 1915, the society became a registered body with Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee as its first president. The society took upon itself the task of building the Dhammarajika Caitya Vihara in Calcutta which was inaugurated in 1920. In

1931, a vihara was built in Sarnath alongside the Maha Bodhi Vidyalaya, the Vihara Library, the Maha Bodhi free dispensary, the Maha Bodhi primary school and the Teachers' Training College. In 1949, after sixty years' long struggle, the society succeeded in getting the Buddha Gaya Temple Act passed winning fifty percent representation for Buddhists in the temple management committee. In the same year, the relics of Sariputta and Moggallana were brought to India, which were later enshrined at a stupa in Sanci. The Maha Bodhi Society was mainly engaged in creating awareness about Buddhism among Indian masses but it did not engage itself in conversion to Buddhism. It tried to establish connections between India and the Buddhist countries. It built Buddhist viharas, rest-houses for pilgrims and Buddhist schools with the help of industrialist Jugal Kishore Birla. According to E Zelliot (1979:398), "Although it undoubtedly did much to further the knowledge of Buddhism in India, the Maha Bodhi Society did not attract more than a brief period those who were actually Buddhists, and in its chief area of work, Calcutta, there seem to be no converts."

Contribution of Acharya Dharmananda Kosambi

Another important figure in the revival of Buddhism by the end of the nineteenth century is Dharmananda Kosambi, born in 1876 in Goa. He was attracted to Buddhism due to a popular childrens' magazine. He left home at the age of twenty-three to learn Buddhism. In order to study Sanskrit he went to distant places in India. He then went to Ceylon to study Theravada. In 1906, he taught Pali at the Calcutta University and the National College of Calcutta and then at the Fergusson College in Pune from 1912 to 1918. He edited the Visuddhimagga and wrote several other books and articles on Buddhism. His book *Bhagavan Buddha*, published in 1940, influenced Dr Ambedkar's rational interpretation of Buddhism. Besides this, Dharmananda Kosambi also published a book on inscriptions and a Pali Reader. His writings are well-known for his rational interpretation of Buddhist material. In order to revive Buddhism, he established a vihara in the suburb of Bombay called Bahujana-vihara "the vihara of the masses" in 1936, which was later handed down to the Maha Bodhi Society. He arranged fellowships for sending Indian students to Ceylon to learn Buddhism. He produced a batch of learned students such as PV Bapat, NK Bhagvat, CV Joshi, CV Rajwade, etc. These disciples left their mark on Buddhist scholarship in India.



Contribution of Rahula Sankrityayana

Mahapandita Rahula Sankrityayana was born in 1893 as Kedarnath Pande at a village called Pandaha in the Ajamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh. Having left school at an early age, he taught himself Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, English, Sinhala and Tibetan. At sixteen he left for Varanasi to study Sanskrit and at twenty he entered the Vaiṣṇava order and was destined to succeed to an endowed Mahantship at Chhapra, which he denounced.

During his two years imprisonment (1925-26) he read some works on Buddhism. Being influenced by the Buddhist thought, he decided to go to Ceylon and learn the language and literature of Buddhism. Accordingly, in 1928, he went to Ceylon and joined the Vidyalaṅkara Pariveṇa. At this great monastic college he taught Sanskrit and studied Pali and mastered the Tripiṭakas. On account of his perfect knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures the Saṅgha recognized him as a Tripiṭakacarya.

In order to master the literature of Sanskrit Buddhism, Rahula Sankrityayana went to Tibet in 1930 and stayed there for fifteen months. He came to the conclusion that there can be no personal God and that Buddhism was the only religious system he could accept. It is said that at this time he received his initiation as a monk telegraphically from Acharya Dharmananda Kosambi. Rahula Sankrityayana in all made four tours to Tibet, the one undertaken in 1926 being the most astounding. At the end of this trip, Rahula Sankrityayana brought back with him originals and photo-copies of valuable Sanskrit manuscripts laden on twenty-two mules. The treasure also included about 200 Tibetan paintings of great historical and artistic value and Tibetan manuscripts. Prof. Stcherbatsky (quoted in KP Jayaswal 1988:421), described this visit "as deserving the holding of an International Conference to discuss the importance of the discovery and to mark the event." Rahula Sankrityayana's friend Jayaswal made all the necessary arrangements to enable Rahulji to put his valuable collection in the Patna Museum and the Bihar Research Society, Patna. This collection is the biggest Tibetan library outside Tibet.

With the help of a Chinese scholar, Rahula Sankrityayana translated or rather restored the lost Sanskrit text called Vijnaptimatrata back into Sanskrit, which was later published in the Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society. For Buddhism, he translated into Hindi the Majjhimanikaya and the Dhammapada (1933), the Vinayapiṭaka (1934), the Digha Nikaya (1935), and compiled a life of the Buddha under the name of the *Buddhacarya*. During his third visit to Tibet, he succeeded in making his own handwritten copies of about seventy new Buddhist texts comprising one and a half lakhs of verses. He found in Tibet translations of the Dohas of Sarahapada which he edited in original Apabhraṁsa together with its Tibetan and Hindi translation (1954). He compiled a Russian-Sanskrit dictionary containing 400 pages. A Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionary by him was published by the Hindustani Academy, Allahabad. He also wrote a book entitled Tibet Men Bauddha Dharma (Buddhism in Tibet) (1935) and a voluminous book in two parts entitled Madhya Asia ka Itihasa. He passed away in 1963 at the age of seventy.

Contribution of Bhadanta Ananda Kausalyayana

Bhadanta Ananda Kausalyayana was born in Punjab as Harinamdas in 1905. He was the first Vaiṣṇavaite to join the Arya Samaj. Traveling from place to place he reached Ceylon where Rahula Sankrityayana was teaching Sanskrit in 1928. He studied the Tipiṭaka fifteen hours a day for eighteen months. He was ordained into the Saṅgha in 1928 after which he went to Tibet for further study. He then went to London with Rahula Sankrityayana. "A prolific writer, Kausalyayana has some sixty books and pamphlets to his credit" (E Zelliot 1979:402). Kausalyayana actively participated in the conversion movement. He initiated around 100,000 people in Bombay ten days after the death ceremony of Dr Ambedkar in 1956. He spent much of his life in Nagpur training new monks and lay leaders. "The intellectual freedom of Buddhism and the depth of its social commitment impressed him" (E Zelliot 1979:402). He was influenced by Dharmananda Kosambi and lived with him for some time in Sarnath. He passed away in 1988.

Contribution of Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap

Bhikshu Jagdish Kashyap was born as Jagdish Narain in 1908 at Ranchi in the state of Jharkhand, India. He was simple in habits, and unconventional and radical in outlook. During his academic career, he also participated in the social, cultural and political activities of the country and thus associated with the mainstream of the relevant movements. He came under the influence of the Arya Samaj through his maternal grandfather Ayodhya Prasad. Eventually he became an active Arya Samaj worker and joined one of the Gurukulas after completing his Masters in 1931. This was the same period when his interest in Buddhism increased. In that Gurukula, he realized that "the members of the Arya Samaj were not able to free themselves from their caste background in their social relationships" (AK Narain 1979:xvii). During this period, he started to study the Pali Tipiṭaka in order to pursue a doctoral dissertation in Buddhist philosophy. He wanted to go to Sri Lanka to "study Pali in order to revive a lost tradition in India" (AK Narain 1979:xviii). With the help of Rahula Sankrityayana and Ananda Kausalyayana, Jagdish Narain left for Sri Lanka in November 1933. As in the case of Rahula Sankrityayana, Jagdish Narain taught Sanskrit in the Vidyalaṅkara Pariveṇa and learnt Pali. In 1934, he was ordained into the Saṅgha by the Ven. L Dhammananda Nayaka Mahathera of the Vidyalaṅkara Pariveṇa and thus he became Bhikshu Jagdish Kashyap.

"Jagdish Kashyap now joined Rahula Sankrityayana and Anand Kausalyayana to make that 'trio' of the new Buddhist monks of northern India destined to play a substantial role in a variety of ways for over four decades in the revival of Buddhism or what was perhaps more properly labeled according to them as the 'Buddhist Movement' of India" (AK Narain 1979: xix). He translated the Dighanikaya into Hindi jointly with Rahula Sankrityayana. During his stay in Penang, Malaysia, he delivered lectures at the Chinese Buddhist Association, which were later published under the title *Buddha Dhamma* in Penang in 1935. After his return from Sri Lanka, the 'trio' met at Allahabad and decided their plans for future; Rahula Sankrityayana said he would love to publish as many books as possible, Ananda Kausalyayana said that he would love to undertake lecture tours and do journalistic work of writing articles, and Jagdish Kashyap expressed his desire to spend his time in study, research, teaching and in founding educational institutions.

From 1937, Bhikshu Jagdish Kashyap mainly stayed in Sarnath and became associated with the Maha Bodhi Society. Along with the other two of the 'trio', he started translating the Pali Tipiṭaka into Hindi. He also wrote other literary and scholarly works. He also served as headmaster of the newly-founded Maha Bodhi High School at Sarnath. He also trained the *sramaṇeras* by teaching them Indian and Western philosophy. His idea was to develop a Buddhist University at Sarnath, which could not be fulfilled due to his other activities. He was awarded the degree of Tripiṭakacarya by the Vidyalaṅkara Pariveṇa of Sri Lanka. He was instrumental in starting studies of Pali at the Banaras Hindu University. He also taught Buddhist logic at the Department of Philosophy in the Banaras Hindu University. He accompanied Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, to Burma where he took a sapling of the Bo-tree as India's gift to the newly-independent Burma. He was sent to Tibet with the relics of Sariputta and Moggallana.

In order to create an atmosphere for his project to revive interest in Buddhism and in Buddhist studies in Bihar, to introduce the teaching of Pali in the schools and colleges of Magadha and to re-establish the glory of Nalanda, Bhikkhu Kashyap made a *carika* in Magadha and spoke to people in that area in their own language, i.e. Magahi, and told them the story of the Buddha and their lost glory. He initiated the teaching of Pali at the Nalanda College of Bihar-sharif and himself taught Pali, which soon became a popular subject. He preferred Nalanda rather than Gaya "perhaps, being an educationist he found more of a cause in restoring the Nalanda University than the Chaitya-Vihara complex of Bodhgaya" (AK Narain 1979:xxv). During this period, Bhikkhu Kashyap was invited to organize the Institute of Pali at Nalanda, which later developed into the Nava Naland Mahavihara, deemed a University. Bhikshu Kashyap's idea was "to develop Buddhist studies in a comprehensive and comparative framework first of the Indian cultural history and then gradually of Asian civilization by including Chinese and Japanese studies" (AK Narain 1979:xxvi). With this idea, he brought staunch Brahman scholar of Sanskrit. Satkari Mookherji, and his student Nathmal Tatia, specialized in Jainism, to the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara. With the same view, he went to China in 1956 and persuaded Chou En Lai to make a gift of the relics of Huen-tsang to Naland. He invited a Japanese scholar, Prof. Kaziyama, to study and teach at Nalanda. Thus, in a short period of time, he was successful in building the Institute both physically as well as academically. It soon began to attract students from various countries. His scheme of publishing the whole of the Tipiṭaka in the Devanagara script was accepted by the government of India as a five-year plan when it decided to celebrate the 2,500th birth anniversary of the Buddha. The first volume was published in 1956 and the last in 1961.

In 1959, Bhikshu Jagdish Kashyap became the first Professor of Pali and Buddhism at the Sampurnananda Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya. In 1965, he became the Director of the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara. During this period he initiated two more projects: Tipiṭaka Mahakosa and Pali Aṭṭhakatha. He helped in the establishment of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath (now Central University of Tibetan Studies). He was in touch with Dr Ambedkar from the early 1950s and presided over some of the group conversion ceremonies. He also gave initiation to individuals and supported the organization of the Vipassana meditation training directed by SN Goenka. He took a keen interest in the Magahi language and culture and became the founder president of the Magahi Cultural Association in 1954 and the chairman of the Magahi Research Institute in 1960. He passed away in 1976.

Emergence of Modern Buddhism

The mid-twentieth century witnessed the emergence of at least four different forms of modern Buddhism: Dr Ambedkar's Navayana "Modern Vehicle", which is in accordance with science, upholds equality and opposes casteism; the Ven. Sangharakshita's Triyana "Threefold Vehicle", which brings harmony among different schools and sects of Buddhism by taking a reconciliatory approach; SN Goenka's practising Buddhism, which focusses the non-transcendental and secular aspect of Buddhism through the mass movement of the Vipassana Movement; and His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama's Universal Buddhism, which synthesizea old and new ideas by promoting inter-religious harmony, world peace, universal love and universal responsibility.

This emergence of modern Buddhism can be attributed to the changes which took place in Europe and America in the eighteenth century. The European renaissance had its effect on nineteenth century intellectuals in India. Advances in science with ever-new discoveries posed challenges to the religious order. Day-by-day it became difficult to scientifically prove the old religious ideas such as ritualism and the existence of God. The advent of democracy, socialism and communism propounded new ideals of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice. As a result of this new challenge, leaders of all religions started re-assessing and re-organizing their religious tenets in the light of scientific development. Consequently, the non-transcendental ideas in religion gained precedence, religion started becoming more human-centric rather than theo-centric.

Buddhism also faced the same challenges, which gave rise to the phenomenon of the rediscovery of Buddhism. There came about a realization among its followers and others that the principles of scientific rationality, atheism, and human-centrism are already embedded in Buddhism. However, there is a need to highlight them in a new situation. The core values of modern Buddhism such as its human-centrism based on universal love, compassion and scientific rationality formed the basis of the modern forms of Buddhism proposed by these four thinkers.

Besides this, colonialism triggered cross-cultural dialogue as Westerners became aware of Buddhist wisdom and Buddhists in Asia were exposed to Western ideas. Moreover, Buddhists worldwide following different forms of Buddhism came into contact with each other, which provided an opportunity for intra-religious dialogue and the quest for finding common ground of different Buddhist sects began.

Contribution of Dr BR Ambedkar and the Concept of the Navayana

Dr BR Ambedkar (1891-1956) is an icon of the modern revival of Buddhism in India. His struggle against the vice of social inequality brought him to Buddhism. Born in a so-called low-caste Mahar community, Dr Ambedkar had direct experience of untouchability. He was a brilliant student and in 1907 became one of the first untouchables to enter the University of Bombay. He then received a fellowship to study Political Science at the Columbia University. He had two PhD's from Columbia and the London School of Economics, and had been admitted to the British Bar. He then returned to India and led the struggle for social equality.

Dr Ambedkar tried initially to reform Hinduism by organizing social movements for winning equal access to village tanks and temples. Throughout these years, on the one hand he was highlighting the narrow, unjust and irrational aspect of the Hindu religion to its followers, and on the other, was making his followers realize the rigid social and religious order of Hinduism. He suggested orthodox Hindus should give up ritualistic Vedic religion, which gave divine sanction to the caste hierarchy and adopt Upaniṣadic principle as the basis of the Hindu religion. However, when he realized the vanity of his efforts to reform Hinduism, he decided to quit the religion in which he was born for a religion that fulfilled his ideal of a true religion (*saddhamma*). He made a formal announcement to this effect at the village Yeole in the state of Maharashtra in 1935.

As mentioned above, Dr Ambedkar was introduced to Buddhism through a short biography of the Buddha in Marathi written and presented to him by his teacher Krishnrao Arjun Keluskar at the success of his matriculation exam. The rational and the humanitarian teaching of the Buddha had a deep impact on his mind. After studying different theist and non-theist Indian as well as non-Indian religions, he realized that Buddhism fitted in well in his framework of ideal religion of the modern world. For him (2003:104), the ideal religion should fulfill the following four criteria:

1 Be governed by righteousness and not merely by law.
2 Be rational and in accordance with scientific attitudes.
3 Uphold the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity.
4 Should not glorify poverty.

His decision to accept Buddhism was not emotional but a result of his serious contemplation and thorough investigation. His long study of Buddhism, which he carried out during his stay in the US and UK and even after coming back to India, revealed to him that the existing form of Buddhism prevalent in most of the Theravada and the Mahayana countries did not agree with his concept of an ideal religion and there was a need to present Buddhism in a new form that fulfils this requirement. He fulfilled this need by writing a book entitled *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, posthumously published in 1956, wherein he presented the revised form of Buddhism, which in his view was close to the original.

While presenting this new form of Buddhism, Dr Ambedkar consciously sieved out miraculous events of the Buddha's life. Dr Ambedkar re-examined the statement of the four noble truths. According to him, this traditional statement of the four noble truths is pessimistic. One cannot say that human life itself is suffering. Rather, there are sufferings in human life and the Buddha taught the way to remove them. According to Dr Ambedkar, the explanation of the karma doctrine and the acceptance of rebirth in traditional Buddhism are against the Buddhist principle of non-self and therefore should be reinterpreted in the light of the principle of non-self. Dr Ambedkar was in favour of the monk who has concern for social welfare rather than his personal liberation. He proposed the role of a missionary in the cause of Buddhism for an ideal bhikkhu. Dr Ambedkar suggested a clear-cut distinction between religion and the Dhamma. According to him, religion is theo-centric and therefore personal, whereas the Dhamma is human-centric and so a social phenomenon. Moral principles that govern human relations are the true nature of the Dhamma and to remove all sorts of evil from human life is its sole purpose. According to Dr Ambedkar, through the establishment of a just moral order by removing social evils such as disparity, immorality and injustice, Buddhism can answer Marxism.

On October 14, 1956, Dr Ambedkar along with his 380,000 followers embraced Buddhism through the historic mass conversion at the Dikṣabhumi ground in Nagpur. Dr Ambedkar specially invited a Burmese monk, the Ven. Chandramani Mahathera for this initiation. The unique feature was that Dr Ambedkar first received initiation from the Ven. Chandramani Mahathera and then, being a householder (*upasaka*), he initiated millions of his followers in Buddhism. This was followed by series of mass conversions at various places in India. Besides the *trisaraṇa* and *pancasila,* Dr Ambedkar also asked his followers to observe twenty-two additional vows rejecting theist notions, rituals and priests.

These twenty-two vows form the core of Ambedkarite Buddhism. Nowadays, many Ambedkarite Organizations work towards these vows, believing that they are responsible for the existence and rapid growth of present Buddhism in India. The umbrella organization known as the Twenty-two Pledges Practice and Propagation Movement is fully devoted to this purpose. This totally non-political movement is the brain-child of Arvind Sontakke, and comprises around 5,000,000 volunteers including many regional and local groups throughout India.

When asked by journalists on the eve of his conversion whether the Buddhism he was going to embrace was Mahayana or Hanayana, Dr Ambedkar replied: "The Buddhism I am going to embrace is neither the Mahayana nor the Hinayana. If you want to name it, you may call it Navayana (a new vehicle)" (Godbole 2004:181), thus acknowledging the distinct nature of the form of Buddhism he proposed:

Ambedkar's Buddhism seemingly differs from that of those who accept by faith, who 'go for refuge' and accept the canon. This much is clear from its basis: it does not accept in totality the scriptures of the Theravada, the Mahayana or the Vajrayana" (Gail Omvedt 2003:8).

Besides writing *The Buddha and His Dhamma,* which he referred to as the gospel of Buddhism, Dr Ambedkar wrote many articles and delivered speeches concerning Buddhism. Besides this, he prepared a Pali-Marathi bilingual dictionary, a Pali-English-Marathi-Gujarati-Hindi pentaglot dictionary, an English-Pali associative lexicon, a Pali grammar for beginners, and lessons of Pali conversations, which can be treated as his important academic contribution. In order to satisfy the religious needs of the newly converted community, he provided a manual of Buddhist daily worship. He also promised to compile a manual of Buddhist rituals, which he unfortunately could not finish during his lifetime.

In order to fulfill his mission of social, political and economic upliftment of the depressed classes, Dr Ambedkar established a number of institutions and organizations. In 1924, he founded the *Bahishkrit Hitkarani Sabha* to place the grievances of the Untouchables before the government. Promotion of education and spread of culture, advancement and improvement of the economic condition among the depressed classes were its prime objectives. In 1925, the *Depressed Classes Institute* was established with the same purpose. It was an organization of the depressed classes which is conducted by members of the depressed classes in the interest of the depressed classes. In 1928, he established the *Samata Sainik Dal.* Around the same time, he also started the *Samaj Samata Saṅgh*. He formed a political party called the Independent Labour Party in 1936. Its aim was to concentrate and solve the problems and grievances of the landless, poor tenets, agriculturists and workers. In 1942, he founded the All India Scheduled Castes Federation to organize the scheduled castes of India, to educate them and to agitate for their social, economic and political freedom, and to make them strive for their well-being and advancement. In 1945, he established the *Peoples' Education Society* managed and administered by Buddhists. The prime objectives of this society were to provide education, secondary, collegiate, technical, physical and the like; to start, establish, conduct and/or aid educational and Buddhist religious associations; to provide facilities for education of the poor and the Buddhists; to create and foster general interest in education among the scheduled castes and Buddhists who are converted from amongst the scheduled castes and in particular to give them special facilities; and to promote science, Buddhist and other literature and fine arts and to impart useful knowledge in comparative studies of religion. These objectives reflect Dr Ambedkar's vision of Buddhist education combined with the study of comparative religion, literature, science, art and other technical branches of knowledge. In 1955, Dr Ambedkar registered the Buddhist Society of India, a mother organization of all the newly converted Buddhists. The details of this society are discussed later.[8]

It was a great loss for Buddhists that soon after the mass conversion in October 1956, Dr Ambedkar passed, leaving behind a great dream of Buddhist India for his followers to realize. His impact on his followers is so great that he is almost theisized by them. His position in the heart of his followers is equal to that of the Buddha. He is called a Bodhisattva and his picture is revered and worshipped alongside the Buddha. The invocation to Dr Ambedkar forms a part of routine Buddhist chanting. No religious event is performed without worshipping him. Every Neo-Buddhist greets each other with the words *Jai Bhim* "Victory to Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar".

Thus India yet again gave a new dimension to Buddhism in the form of the Navayana. Never before in its history of 2,500 years had Buddhism become so engaged in the process of social reform. It proved its potential by awakening a society that was dormant and by enlightening the one groping in the dark. This marked the beginning of a new era in the history of Indian Buddhism known as the Dalit Buddhist Movement.

The Dalit Buddhist Movement was somewhat hindered by Dr Ambedkar's death so shortly after the conversion and did not receive the immediate mass support from the Untouchable population that Dr. Ambedkar had hoped for. Division and lack of direction among the leaders of the Ambedkarite movement have been an additional impediment. The conversion movement was curtailed by the government policy of denying to Buddhists the rights and privileges given to the depressed Hindu castes. The Buddhist countries initially ignored the new Buddhist movement, or dismissed it as a pseudo-religious or political phenomenon. Some foreign monks who were invited to guide the newly-emerged Buddhist community failed in their task due to the lack of understanding of the situation. They merely imposed their own traditional customs and practices on an ignorant laity. Buddhism became a matter of rites and ceremonies, of looking after *bhikkhus* and building *viharas* to accommodate them. To a great extent the indigenous monks of the community failed to take upon themselves the role of missionaries as was expected by Dr Ambedkar. Within two decades the signs of decline were everywhere, and those sincere people who had hoped for a new life became disillusioned. However, Buddhism once again started showing signs of revival with the emergence of new leadership and dimensions.

After the mass conversion of 1956, the Buddhist revival remained concentrated in two states, Dr Ambedkar's native Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh — the land of Bodhananda Mahasthavir, Acharya Medharthi and their associates.

In Uttar Pradesh, after Bodhananda Mahasthavir and Acharya Medharthi, Rajendranath Aherwar appeared as an important Dalit leader in Kanpur. He joined the Republican Party of India and converted to Buddhism along with his family in 1961. In 1967, he founded the Kanpur branch of the *Bharatiya Bauddha Mahasabha*. He held regular meetings where he preached Buddhism, officiated at Buddhist weddings and life-cycle ceremonies, and organized festivals on Dr Ambedkar's birthday, the day of Vesakha, the day Dr Ambedkar was converted, and the day he passed away.

In 1980, the Dalit Buddhist movement in Uttar Pradesh received a new boost with the emergence of Bhikkhu Dipankar, who hailed from a low caste cobbler community. He was backed by Rahula Ambawadekar, a Dalit leader of the Republican Party of India who founded the Uttar Pradesh branch of the Dalit Panthers, an aggressive Dalit organization inspired by the Maharashtrian Dalit Panthers in 1981.

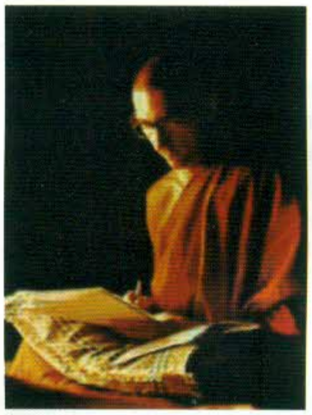
In Maharashtra the Dalit Buddhist movement was initially led by Bhadanta Ananda Kausalyayana and some of the close associates of Dr Ambedkar. These included Dr Ambedkar's son and daughter-in-law, viz. Yashavant or Bhaiyyasaheb Ambedkar and Meera Ambedkar, Dadasaheb Rupavate, Dadasaheb Gayakwad, BC Kambale, RS Gavai, Raja Dhale, Namdev Dhasal, Ramdas Athavale, Yashavant Manohar, Prakash Ambedkar, etc.

Another active personality in the present Indian Buddhist scenario is Japanese-born Bhadant Nagarjun Surai Sasai. He came to India in 1966 and met Nichidatsu Fuji, whom he helped with the Peace Pagoda at Rajgir. He fell out with Fuji and decided to return to Japan. However, guided by a dream, he came to Nagpur in the state of Maharashtra, the place where the 1956 mass conversion had taken place. He started mixing with the Buddhist folk in Nagpur and greeted them with "Jai Bhim" and also started building viharas. In 1987, after a court case he was granted Indian citizenship. Sasai is one of the main leaders of the campaign to free the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya from Hindu control.

Contribution of Sangharakshita and the Establishment of the Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha and the Ideal of the Triyāna

The Ven. Sangharakshita was born in Britain as Dennis Lingwood in 1925. He was introduced to Buddhism through reading when he was forced to take bed-rest as a consequence of the wrong diagnosis of an illness. At sixteen he came across the Vajracchedikaprajnaparamita Sutra, and after reading it he had a spiritual realization that he was a Buddhist not only in this birth but also in the past. During the Second World War he was appointed a position in India by the then British government. After coming to India, he met many spiritual masters and had discussions with them. He was also associated with the Maha Bodhi Society established by Anagarika Dharmapala. He practiced meditation and became a Buddhist novice at a young age. He then received the Bhikkhu ordination from the Ven. Chandramani Mahathera of Burma, then at Kusinara. He studied Theravada Buddhist philosophy and Buddhist logic with Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap. Thereafter he devoted fourteen years of his life in the Kalingpong region of Darjeeling of West Bengal to the study and propagation of Buddhism. During this period, the Ven. Sangharakshita came in contact with the Tibetan master Dhardo Rinpoche from whom he learned Tibetan Buddhism. Influenced by this teaching, Sangharakshita received the Bodhisattva initiation from Dhardo Rinpoche. Later he also received the Vajrayana initiation from a Tantric master, CN Chen. Thus, Sangharakshita was initiated in all the three major schools of Buddhism, the Theravada Śravakayana, Mahayana Bodhisattvayana and the Tantric Vajrayana.

It seems that the confluence of these three schools shaped his reconciliatory and inclusive approach towards Buddhism. Due to this non-sectarian approach, Sangharakshita made many friends across the Buddhist world but also had confrontations with orthodox Buddhists. He, however, remained firm on his non-sectarian stand.



The Ven. Sangharakshita was attracted to the writings and personality of Dr Ambedkar and took a supportive approach towards his plan of conversion to Buddhism (Sangharakshita 2006:15ff). After the passing away of Dr Ambedkar, Sangharakshita worked tirelessly to console the newly-converted mass of people and to support the new Buddhist movement. In spite of this association with Dr Ambedkar and his movement, the approaches of these two great figures towards Buddhism differed from each other. Dr Ambedkar throughout emphasized the moral and social aspect of Buddhism, whereas Sangharakshita looked at Buddhism as a religion, a way of practice and the path to salvation. Dr Ambedkar's focus was on the reconstruction of Buddhism from the scientific point of view whereas Sangharakshita's approach was that of reconciliation among various Buddhist schools.

The Ven. Sangharakshita returned to England around 1966 and established the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order in 1967 to organize Buddhists in the West. In India, the organization worked under the name Trailokya Bauddha Mahasaṅgha Sahayaka Gaṇa (TBMSG). Sangharakshita's reconciliatory and inclusive approach served as a theoretical foundation for this organization. Through his book *A Survey of Buddhism,* he tried to find a common ground for various Buddhist schools and sects that could hold them together. He found five spiritual faculties, four noble truths and Dependent Origination as core ideas common to all sects and schools. He highlighted the proactive form of the theory of Dependent Origination over the reactive one. The reactive form of the theory of Dependent Origination found in many discourses starts with ignorance and ends with dukkha whereas the proactive form in a few Pali discourses, hitherto ignored by scholars and practitioners, starts with dukkha and then through faith, zest, tranquility, and concentration culminates in freedom from suffering. Sangharakshita provided a new interpretation of taking refuge in the Triple Gem, the key phenomenon for every Buddhist. He went into the depth of this phenomenon and brought out its five different levels showing the positive progress of an aspirant towards enlightenment.

The Ven. Sangharakshita highlighted the Buddhist concept of a spiritual friend (*kalyaṇamitra*). He proposed that the Buddhist Saṅgha should be the Order of such spiritual friends who have a serious commitment towards the Triple Gem and the spiritual progress of their fellow practitioners. Another key concept proposed by Sangharakshita is that of a Dhammacari, an observer of the Dhamma. This new category of Buddhist practitioner strikes a balance between that of lay householders and celibate monks. According to Sangharakshita, having a serious commitment to the Triple Gem and the core ethical conduct comprising the tenfold physical, verbal and mental moral behavior are the essential characteristics of a Dhammacari no matter whether he is leading a life of a householder or that of a monk. This helped in bridging the traditional gap between the monk community (Saṅgha) and lay followers (*upasakas*).

The Ven. Sangharakshita recognized the importance of religious activities such as daily worship (*puja*), prayer (*vandana*), and meditation. Here too, his reconciliatory and inclusive approach is at work as one can find in them a synthesis of the practices of different Buddhist traditions. People in this tradition have interpreted Dr Ambedkar's Modern Vehicle (Navayana) as taking the same reconciliatory and inclusive approach. Dr Ambedkar's inclusion of Theravada and Mahayana sources indescribing the life of the Buddha, his inclusion of *karuṇa* in the place of *samadhi* in the threefold training of *prajna, sila, karuṇa*, his emphasis on the Bodhisattva ideal and his acceptance of the *mantra Om maṇipadme hum* are seen as proof of this tendency.[9]

The Ven. Sangharakshita's attempt to synthesize various Buddhist schools was subject to criticism by orthodox Buddhists. However, this attempt to globalize Buddhism through the reconciliatory and inclusive approach cannot be undermined. Due to this approach, Sangharakshita's Indian followers seem to have been more accommodating and progressive in their approach; for example, they treated rituals as socio-cultural phenomenon rather than religious and therefore treated it as voluntary, not mandatory. Through the ideals of Kalyaṇamitra and Dhammacari they are more involved in community services. As a result of Sangharakshita's positive attitude towards refined art forms, cultural activities are also playing a vital role in the TBMSG's activities. As a whole, the modern Buddhist movement in India led by TBMSG is trying to strike a balance in the religious, social, political, economic, educational and cultural development of the Buddhist community.

Contribution of SN Goenka and the Spread of the Vipassana Meditation

SN Goenka was born in Myanmar in 1924 into an Indian orthodox Hindu family. From childhood, Goenka had a special attraction for the Indian freedom struggle, especially the hardcore revolutionary movement. He, however, had some apprehensions about Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent Satyagraha movement. Naturally, he also had similar apprehensions about the Buddhist doctrine of non-violence. He was influenced by devotional Hindu ideas. However, there came a turning point in his life when he went on his first Vipassana retreat under his teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin to find a solution to his incurable migraine. After this direct experience of the Vipassana meditation, he became curious about the Buddha's teaching and started reading Buddhist literature. Slowly, his mind overcame prejudices about Buddhism and started appreciating the Buddhist path of human welfare. With an intention to share the benefits of the Buddhadhamma, Goenka introduced the lost tradition of the Vipassana meditation in India in the year 1969 in the form of meditation courses of different duration.

Besides conducting meditation courses, Goenka has given many talks, written many books and inspirational articles about Dhamma, the majority of them for the monthly Hindi *Vipassana Newsletter*. This also includes his writings specially meant to remove misconceptions regarding the Buddha's teachings.[10] He has also composed thousands of rhymed couplets called *doha*s for the easy understanding of the Dhamma.

Vipassana meditation has gained in popularity in recent years. Its spread in the different corners of the world is phenomenal. Its main retreat centre is at Igatpuri in the Nashik district of Maharashtra. Today there are sixty-nine centres in India and across the world. In the year 2009-2010 alone, around 110,000 people have participated in the Vipassana courses. This movement is dedicated to lay practitioners, thus the practice of Vipassana has no longer remained the province of only a small number of monks and householders. Today, it has crossed the boundaries of countries, religions, creeds, castes and communities to become universal.

This tradition of Vipassana meditation has its roots in Myanmar, where Goenka learnt this meditation technique from his Burmese master Sayagyi U Ba Khin. The tradition goes back to Saya Thetgyi and Ledi Sayadaw, who tried to take Buddhism to the masses. The tradition through its lineage of teachers claims for itself purity and authenticity.[11]

Another important feature of this tradition is its non-sectarian approach to the Dhamma. The technique of the Vipassana meditation it teaches is universal as can be seen in its observance of the universal moral conduct, use of respiration and bodily sensations as objects of meditation, realization of the universal principle of impermanence, and practice of loving kindness towards all beings. It emphasizes that "the teaching of Buddha is so universal that people from different sects and communities can follow it and experience its benefits" (SN Goenka 2006:18).

Goenka has proved this statement by giving Vipassana to people of various religions, communities, age groups, economic and educational background. He has successfully used this technique even in prisons for the rehabilitation of prisoners. Although ideas such as past birth and rebirth do occur in Goenka's discourses, he emphasizes that even without believing in these ideas one can experience the result of the practice in this life. Thus, Goenka's presentation shows close affinity with the non-transcendental interpretation of Buddhism.

Regarding the practice of meditation, this tradition seems to rely on the original discourses given by the Buddha, which are available in Pali and the practical experience of the Vipassana masters of this tradition. It gives utmost importance to the application of the theory rather than the theory itself. The theory available in the form of the Buddha's discourses is simply seen as a means to clarify doubts and a source of inspiration for undertaking practice.[12]

In brief, this is a meditation movement focusing mainly on the lay community. In order to reach a larger audience it has taken a secular approach in its teaching, in that it gives prime importance to the practice of meditation rather than the study of scriptures. At the same time it also claims purity, originality and eventually as the authenticity of the tradition.

The theory of *tilakkhaṇa* and discernment of *namarupa* provides the much needed theoretical base for this meditation technique. This theoretical framework has shaped the practical aspects of the Vipassana meditation taught in Goenka's tradition. The structure of the courses is planned on the basis of traditional practical wisdom with some hints from the scriptures. The triad of *sila*, *samadhi* and *panna* plays an important role in the scheme of the ten-day course. Mindfulness of respiration and bodily feelings are accepted as effective means of developing the awareness of impermanence. The Vipassana meditation technique taught in Goenka's tradition is a synthesis of *anpanasati* of *kayanupassana* and *vedananupassana* taught in the Satipaṭṭhanasutta. However, it deviates from the commentarial tradition in terms of textual interpretation and mode of practice to a great extent.

Goenka not only devoted his life to the propagation of the Vipassana meditation, but also made committed and systematic efforts for the publication of Pali literature and research. In order to promote research in this field, he established the Vipassana Research Institute in 1985.

Thus, Goenka brings out the humanitarian, secular, universal and flawless nature of the Buddha's teaching and makes it accessible to the masses through the practical experience of Vipassana meditation. He is also successful in taking Buddhism to non-Buddhists and making them more open to Buddhism by breaking down the barriers of their religious prejudices. This is Goenka's important contribution to Buddhist thought and practice.

Contribution of HH the Dalai Lama

Among world Buddhist leaders, His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama holds a unique place. He has devoted his entire life to global peace, harmony, and non-violence. In 1959, China established its rule over Tibet as a result of which the Dalai Lama fled to India with millions of his followers. Many more Tibetans fled to other countries after that and are leading the lives of refugees. For the last fifty years, through the Tibetan government-in-exile with its headquarters at Dharamsala in the state of Himachal Pradesh, His Holiness is working relentlessly for the rights of Tibetans to practice and preserve their religious and cultural heritage. Besides fighting the Tibetan cause for freedom, he is spreading throughout the world the Buddha's message of non-violence and compassion. His lucid and clear discourses have transformed the life and thoughts of many.

Through his book *Ethics for the New Millennium* HH the Dalai Lama has propagated the Buddhist principle of universal compassion. His teaching of universal peace emerges from the concept of universal responsibility embedded in the traditional Bodhisattva ideal. He initiated dialogue between the Buddhist philosophy on the one hand and modern physics, neuro-science and psychology on the other. His thoughts on Buddhism and science are presented in his book *The Universe in a Single Atom.* He advocates the principle of religious tolerance and emphasizes the need of morality, mental peace, concern for human welfare and universal responsibility as essential qualities of a political leader. He also underlines ethical behavior in economical affairs.

HH the Dalai Lama's struggle for the cause of Tibet and its Buddhist culture has crossed regional boundaries and inspired many. Under his auspices a number of academic, cultural and religious institutions are thriving in India. These are not only benefitting the Tibetan community in exile but also the Indian community at large. The state of Maharashtra has witnessed an emergence of the Indian Buddhist Order of Tibetan Buddhism called the Buddhayana Mahasaṅgha. Some of its members are receiving traditional training in Tibetan Buddhism in Tibetan monasteries. HH the Dalai Lama's fresh insights into traditional Buddhism opened new vistas of study, such as Buddhism and science, Buddhism and psychology, Buddhist economics, Buddhist leadership and inter-faith dialogue. The universally appealing personality of the Dalai Lama has given a new face to Buddhism, which is attracting Indian Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike.

Status of Buddhist Population

In 1931, the Buddhist population residing in the territory of present-day India was about 157,000, located mainly in the north-eastern and north-western parts of India. There were about 101,000 Buddhists in the north-east, 38,500 in the north-west and 17,500 in the rest of India.[13] In 1951, Buddhist population rose to 180,823. However, by 1961 it had increased to 3,256,036, showing a phenomenal growth of 1700.67%. This changed the ratio of Buddhists to the total population from 0.05% in 1951 to 0.74% in 1961. According to the Census of 1971, there were nearly four million Buddhists. The exact figure is 3,812,325 (Census of India 1971 series 1, India paper, 2 religion) showing a 17.2% growth-rate. Out of this, 3.3 million were located in the state of Maharashtra and adjacent districts of Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh states. The rest of the population was divided mainly in two areas of north-eastern India: to the right of the line drawn from Sikkim to Calcutta containing about 350,000 Buddhists, and in the north-west in Jammu and Kashmir state and its adjacent districts of Himachal Pradesh state, containing about 93,000. The remaining 100,000 were distributed in various other states of India such as 39,500 in Uttar Pradesh, 9,000 in Delhi, 14,000 in Mysore, 8,500 in Orissa, 5,500 in Gujarat, 5,000 in Bihar and 3,500 in Rajasthan (the figures given are correct to the nearest 500).

As per the Census report, the Buddhist population of the Himalayan region of north-eastern India is finding it difficult to maintain its relative position in the overall population. Thus, "although in this part of India, Buddhism, mainly of a Tibetan form, has succeeded in re-establishing itself by means of migrants who, for a certain period, have been able to maintain a Buddhist presence in India, nevertheless the percentage of Buddhists to the total population, at least since 1931, has declined" (Trevor Ling 1979:235) - from 18.44 in 1931 to 11.68 in 1971. Buddhists in the remaining part of north-eastern India are located in the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Mizoram and Meghalaya. Although the Buddhist population shows a remarkable growth of nearly 500% from 1931 to 1971, it is mostly attributed to migration.

The Buddhist population of the state of Maharashtra and adjoining districts is a result of the recent movement of mass conversion led by Dr Ambedkar. The areas outside Maharashtra that showed mass conversion during the 1951-61 decade were Madhya Pradesh (4848.28% increase), Uttar Pradesh (300.28% increase) and Punjab (795% increase). Since the 1956 mass conversion, many occasional conversion drives habve been carried out. As a result, the Buddhist population has shown a steady growth rate even after 1971. In 1981, the Buddhist population increased to 4,719,796, registering a growth rate of 22.52%. This growth is mainly centred in the state of Maharashtra where the number of Buddhists has increased from 2,487 in 1951, to 2,789,501 in 1961, to 3,264,223 in 1971 and 3,946,149 in 1981, which is 85.6% of the total Buddhist population. On the heels of the 50th anniversary of the mass conversion in 2006, a number of such drives were organized at New Delhi, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Bihar, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. However, they were strongly opposed by Hindu nationalists. The number of actual converts during these drives is uncertain.

According to the 2001 Census, there are currently 7,955,207 Buddhists in India out of a population of 1,028,610,328. The largest concentration is in Maharashtra (58.3 lakhs), which forms 73.4% of the total Buddhists in India. Karnataka (3.9 lakhs), Uttar Pradesh (3.0 lakhs), West Bengal (2.4 lakhs) and Madhya Pradesh (2.0 lakhs) are other states having a large Buddhist population. Sikkim (28.1%), Arunachal Pradesh (13.0%) and Mizoram (7.9%) have emerged as the top three states in terms of having a maximum percentage of Buddhist population. This makes Buddhism the fifth-largest religion, represented by 0.77% of the overall population of India. There is a growth of 18.2% in the Buddhist population since the Census of 1991, which ranks sixth among the growth-rate of all religions. However, the true figure is said to be far higher - between 20-30 million, but many do not register as Buddhists for fear of losing government concessions that are due to low-status Hindus. Presently, the 2011 census is under way, and in order to counter this situation, an appeal has been made to all Neo-Buddhists to record their religion as Buddhist and caste as their respective scheduled caste.

At present the Dalit converts to Buddhism mainly comprise the members of Dr Ambedkar's own Mahar community of which 75% were converted to Buddhism during 1956-81. The number of converts from the other depressed classes is still small. Lack of visionary leadership, absence of higher education, the strength of Hindu ideas, propaganda and pressure of the Hindu nationalists, and the fear among the non-Mahar communities of Mahar dominance, are some of the factors responsible for this situation. In order to fulfill Dr Ambedkar's dream of making India Buddhist, a number of political and social Buddhist organizations are making efforts to include Dalits of other communities into the Buddhist fold. Some success in this direction is now visible with a number of conversion drives of non-Mahar depressed classes such as theMatang and the confederation of forty-two tribal communities.

This change in attitude of the non-Mahar depressed communities can be attributed to the missionary activities of some social organizations and the success of the Neo-Buddhist community. Due to Dr Ambedkar's thrust in education, the community is giving much importance to this aspect. The percentage of basic education among them is 72.7% as against the national average of 52.21%, which ranks third among the literacy rate of all religions. The Neo-Buddhist community has also grown in confidence and self reliance. Particularly in urban areas signs of prosperity are visible among the converts. They attribute this change in the socio-economic status to their conversion to Buddhism.

Emergence of Buddhist Polity

It should be borne in mind that in the present Indian context, Buddhist polity and social movement cannot be separated from the depressed class polity and social movement. Alongside the conversion to Buddhism, Dr Ambedkar was busy preparing the framework of a new political party called the Republican Party of India (RPI) to actualize his vision of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice. Its seeds were sown with the establishment of the Independent Labour Party in 1936 and the Scheduled Castes Federation in 1942. In 1955, he prepared a blueprint of the constitution of the RPI that was finally registered in 1957 after Dr Ambedkar's passing away. Due to the division among the depressed class leadership, RPI at present is divided into a number of factions. This has weakened the assertive political power of the Neo-Buddhists. This has given way to the emergence of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) as the leader of scheduled castes and Neo-Buddhists.

In 2002, the BSP supremo Kanshiram, a popular outcaste political leader from a Sikh religious background, announced his intention to convert to Buddhism on October 14, 2006 along with his millions of supporters, which included people from untouchables and other communities. This aroused tremendous enthusiasm among the Ambedkarite Buddhists. However, it could not be materialized due to Kanshiram's death on October 9, 2006. He was cremated as per Buddhist rituals. His successor, Mayavati, a Dalit leader from the Camar community has also expressed her wish after gaining power to embrace Buddhism along with her followers. In 2007, Mayavati, by skillfully combining the lower caste and the upper caste politics known as social engineering assumed power in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Although she has not yet converted to Buddhism, she has taken a lead in establishing memorials in the name of Lord Buddha and Dr Ambedkar.

The BSP could make little headway in the state of Maharashtra where the influence of the RPI is still visible. Disenchanted with the post-Ambedkar Neo-Buddhist political leadership, many new political parties are making their appearance. Efforts are also being made to combine the scattered political force of the Dalit Buddhists to win power in order to combat right-wing ideology. The strong, charismatic and visionary leadership of Dr Ambedkar is needed to reorganize and direct the Dalit Buddhist polity.

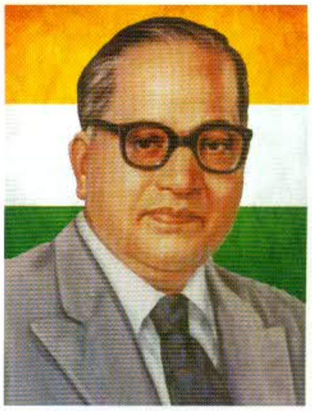
Emergence of Buddhist Social Movements

On the social front, the number of active Buddhist social organizations is very high. These organizations work in various fields such as social grievances, economic development, education, preservation of culture, religion, etc. Notable among them are the Buddhist Society of India (BSI) and Trailokya Bauddha Mahasaṅgha Sahayaka Gaṇa (TBMSG).

As mentioned before, the BSI, a social, cultural and religious organization of the newly converted Buddhists was established in 1955. Its objectives are to promote the spread of Buddhism in India; establish temples for Buddhist worship; establish schools and colleges for religious and scientific subjects; establish orphanages, hospitals and relief centres; start Buddhist seminaries for the preparation of workers for the spread of Buddhism; promote comparative study of all religions; undertake publication of Buddhist literature and to issue leaflets and pamphlets for giving a true understanding of the Buddhist religion to the common masses; create a new order of priests if it becomes necessary to do so; establish a press or presses for the purposes of carrying on the work of publication and to hold gatherings and conferences of the Buddhists of India for common action and to establish fellowship.[14] These objectives reflect Dr Ambedkar's vision for his new religion.

Anagarika Dharmapala

SN Goenka


Dr Ambedkar

Dr Ambedkar served as the first national president of the BSI. The BSI organized the 1956 mass conversion at Nagpur and after the death of Dr Ambedkar the society continued its mission of propagating Buddhism under the presidentship of Yashwant Ambedkar. It carried out conversion drives all over India and a number of BSI branches were established in various parts of the country. The society played an active role in building Buddhist viharas and statues of Dr Ambedkar. Through its newsletter *Prabuddha Bharat* it propagated Buddhism among the common masses. It worked tirelessly for the abolition of ignorance, superstitions and evil customs. It organized conferences and rallies for the propagation of Buddhism. It tried to bring uniformity in Buddhist rituals by publishing a manual of Buddhist rites and rituals called the *Bauddha Jivan Saṁskar Paṭh.* It created a batch of trained Buddhist priests called *Bauddhacarya*s to perform Buddhist rituals.

After the passing away of Yashwant Ambedkar, the BSI suffered an internal power struggle. However, eventually, under the able leadership of Meera Ambedkar and Prakash Ambedkar, the BSI continued its onward journey. It organizes training programs for women Dhamma workers and conducts workshops for novices. It celebrates important Buddhist occasions such as the day of Vesakha, Vassa, etc. In 1986, it established its ownorder of monks. In 1991, it celebrated the birth centenary of Dr Ambedkar and conducted special conversion drives in Agra and Mumbai. The BSI is active in demanding special laws for Buddhists, and self-governance of Buddhist caves and temples.

The other Buddhist social organization, the TBMSG, is the Indian wing of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order whose members have taken refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṅgha and have taken ten precepts of body, speech and mind from the Ven. Sangharakshita or his senior disciples. Founded in 1979 by the Ven. Sangharakshita, the Western Buddhist Order is central to this new Buddhist movement. TBMSG represents a non-sectarian network of Buddhist communities across India, in which the Dharma and social service are closely entwined. TBMSG provides grassroots, indigenously-led meditation retreats and Buddhist training for thousands of Dalits, many of them living in urban slums. Meditation and practice include TBMSG's social work—childcare, schools, literacy projects and the development of libraries, medical programs, and training for self-sufficiency and livelihood. After nearly thirty years, a new generation of Dalit leaders is emerging in TBMSG, building new and confident Dharma communities in India. There have also been initial connections between Dalits and Buddhist people of color in the United States, sharing some of their experiences and ways of practice.

Over aperiod of time, the TBMSG has developed centres at Dapodi, Bhaje, Kondinpur, Vardha, etc. Another project called the Nagaloka has been developed at Nagpur as a centre for interaction between Buddhist followers of Dr Ambedkar, Buddhists from different backgrounds in India and Buddhist from abroad. It runs the Dhatma Sekhiya Course, a one-year introductory residential course in Buddhist teachings and practices, as well as their social application, with special consideration being given to Dr Ambedkar's approach to Buddhism.

The Nagarjuna Training Institute (NTI) is the heart of the Nagaloka and it was established to provide a centre for Buddhist learning and practice, to investigate the social implications of Buddhist practice, and to train social and Dhamma workers. NTI has been developed to train people from all over India in Buddhism as well as basic social action, so that they can go back to their village or town and share what they have learnt.

Emergence of Buddhist Media

The emerging Buddhist polity and social movements have recognized the important role of print and electronic media. Dr Ambedkar started two periodicals, *Muk Nayak* in 1920 and *Bahiṣkṛt Bharat* in 1927, to give voice to his social movement. Later, other periodicals called *Janata* and *Prabuddha Bharat* were started in 1930 and 1956 respectively by his followers. During a span of fifty years, many social and political organizations have brought out a considerable amount of periodicals, pamphlets and other printed material. Notable among them are *Bhim Patrika* published from Jalandhar, Punjab, by LR Bali; *Bahujan Nayak* from Nagpur, Maharashtra by Kanshiram; *Oppressed India* from New Delhi by Kanshiram and *Dalit Voice* from Bangalore, Karnataka by VT Rajashekhar. The new millennium witnessed the emergence of a strong Buddhist media, print as well as electronic. Newspapers such as *Samraṭ*, *Visvasamraṭ*, *Lokanayak*, *Bahujan Maharaṣṭra*, *Dhammasasan*, and *Mahanagar* are making a big impact on the Neo-Buddhist world. All India Radio, a government-run broadcasting company, occasionally broadcasts programs on Buddhist topics. Popular religious television channels such as Astha and Dharmatma telecast programs with Buddhist themes. There is even a proposal to start a purely Buddhist television channel. Another important medium of communication in the modern world is the Internet: there are a number of sites devoted to issues regarding Buddhists and Buddhism. However, much ground still needs to be covered as far as the Buddhist media is concerned.

Emergence of Modern Buddhist Education

Establishment of Departments of Pali and Buddhist Studies

The last century witnessed the establishment of several institutions and departments of Pali and Buddhist Studies in India. Calcutta University established the Department of Pali way back in 1901 and thus the teaching of the Buddhist Studies was initiated in India in a formal manner. Dharmananda Kosambi was the first teacher of Pali at this university, while Satish Chandra Vidyabhushan was the first Indian to gain an MA in Pali there. Pali was included in the academic pursuits of the Bombay University in 1909 due to the joint efforts of RG Bhandarkar and Dharmananda Kosambi. The latter started teaching Pali in the Fergusson College, Pune in 1912.

As a result of the efforts of Bhikkhu Jagdish Kashyap, the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, now a deemed University, was established in the year 1951. As a mark of tribute to the 2,500th year of the Buddha's Parinirvaṇa, the government of India decided to introduce Buddhist studies by way of a full-fledged and independent department at the Delhi University in 1957 under the leadership of Prof. PV Bapat. The Magadh University established a Department of Buddhist Studies in 1983, and the University of Jammu established the Department of Buddhist Studies in 1987. Other important institutions working in this field are:

- Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi
- Sampurnananda Sanskrit University, Varanasi
- Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth, Varanasi
- Centre for Mahayana Buddhist Studies in the Nagarjuna University, Andhra Pradesh
- Centre for Buddhist Studies at the Himachal Pradesh University, Simla
- Punjabi University, Patiala
- Punjab University, Chandigarh
- Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, Hariyana
- Gujarat University, Ahmedabad
- MD College, Ahmedabad
- Vishva-Bharati, Shantiniketan, West Bengal
- Sikkim Institute of Higher Nyingma Studies, Gangtok, Sikkim
- Ram Thakur College, Agartala, Tripura

Situation of Pali and Buddhist Studies in Maharashtra

Almost all the universities of Maharashtra teach Pali at undergraduate level and/or post graduate level besides providing research facilities. There are two separate departments of Pali and Buddhist Studies at the University of Pune. Nagpur University has a Department of Pali and Prakrit Languages. Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad, has a Department of Pali and Buddhism along with a Centre of Buddhist Studies. The Amaravati University, Amaravati, has a Department of Pali and Prakrit but the teaching is imparted only at the Takshashila College and not at the University. The North Maharashtra University, Jalgaon, provides a BA course in Pali and similar is the case at the Swami Ramanandatirtha University, Nanded. Pali is such a popular subject in eastern Maharashtra that it is taught at the Higher Secondary level as well.

The KJ Somaiya Centre for Buddhist Studies teaches Pali and Buddhist Studies and has been recognized by the Mumbai University as its Postgraduate Centre and to run its MA course and research programs. Besides, MA in Pali is also taught at the Siddhartha College, Mumbai, and in the Department of Pali of the Mumbai University for the last few years.

During the tenth Five-Year Plan (2002-2007), the government of India sanctioned Centres for Buddhist Studies for three years to thirteen universities to create awareness concerning such studies by way of holding national seminars, lectures, and symposia on various themes of Buddhist Studies. Many of these centres received an extension in the eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) and some new centres have started functioning. The Ministry of Human Resource Development, on the suggestion of a committee established to find ways to strengthen Buddhist studies, has appointed the Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, a deemed University, as the nodal agency for the development of the Pali language.

Institutes of Tibetan Education

As a result of the establishment of Chinese rule in Tibet in 1959, preservation of the Tibetan culture has became a necessity. In order to preserve this culture, which in a way was an extension of Indian culture that India had lost irrevocably, the Ministry of Culture, launched a scheme for the "Development of Buddhist/Tibetan Culture and Art" under its policy of promoting institutions and organizations of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies. The objective of this scheme is to give financial assistance to the voluntary Buddhist/Tibetan organizations, including monasteries, engaged in the propagation and scientific development of Buddhist/Tibetan culture and research in related fields.

Realizing the importance of the Tibetan Buddhist culture found in the Himalayan region, the Ministry of Culture launched a scheme for the "Preservation and Development of the Cultural Heritage of the Himalayas". The objective of this scheme is to promote, protect and preserve the cultural heritage of the Himalayas by providing financial assistance to institutions and voluntary organizations. With the same view, the government of India also established two educational institutions in India. These are:

Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology

The Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology (previously Namgyal Institute of Tibetology) was established in 1958. It has sponsored and promoted research on the religion, history, language, art and culture of the people of the Tibetan cultural area, which includes Sikkim. It has undertaken a project to document the social history of Sikkim's sixty-odd monasteries and digitize their textual holdings. Furthermore, the Visual Sikkim Project has undertaken to locate, digitize and document old and rare photographs of Sikkim, both in India and abroad. The Institute has also created a digital image bank and holds photographic exhibitions. It has also established a Visual Anthropology Project in order to produce an enduring digital record of Sikkim's vanishing indigenous and Buddhist cultures.

Central Institute of Buddhist Studies

The Central Institute of Buddhist Studies (CIBS), Choglamsar, Leh, came into being in 1959. It was established in order to satisfy the inquisitive needs of the local community about Buddhism and Buddhist studies. It is a landmark in the scenario of Indian education and has approached hitherto untouched subjects.

The main objectives of the CIBS are the:

- Study of Buddhism in all its totality, including its history, and philosophy
- Study of languages connected with Buddhism, such as Pali, Tibetan, Sanskrit and English
- Study of modern subjects such as General Science, Social Studies and Comparative Philosophy, History, Political Science, Arithmetic, Economics
- Translation of Buddhist manuscripts into Indian languages like Hindi, Sanskrit and into English
- Collecting, preserving and publishing rare manuscripts
- Researching on topics related to Buddhism
- Collecting and preserving historical artifacts
- Study of Amchi (Tibetan Medical Science), Thankas (Tibetan Buddhist Paintings), Scripts, religious carvings on wood, and other sculptures related to Buddhism
- Arranging Seminars on Buddhism and organizing exhibitions of Buddhist artifacts for popularizing Buddhism
- Conducting Mass Literacy Programs

Before the establishment of these two institutions, the youth people of the Himalayan region used to go to Tibet for their education.

Central University of Tibetan Studies

In addition to these two institutes, the government of India in 1967 established the Central University of Tibetan Studies (CUTS) (formerly Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies) as a result of the active consideration of HH the fourteenth Dalai Lama and India's first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, with a view to provide education to Tibetan refugees residing in India and also to those from the Himalayan region who have lost the opportunity to study in the Tibetan monasteries due to the Chinese invasion of Tibet. A more important reason for the establishment of the institute was to breathe new life into the past glory which lies in the precious Buddhist scriptures on religion and philosophy, art and architecture, and science and technology, including astronomy and medicine, a substantial volume of which is preserved by the Tibetan exiles despite their calamitous recent history. The university provides a platform for interaction between Buddhist and non-Buddhist Indian philosophical schools, between Buddhist and Western Philosophers, and between Buddhist scholars and scientists.

The main objectives of the University are to:

- Preserve the Tibetan culture and tradition
- Preserve ancient Indian sciences and literature preserved in the Tibetan language, but lost in the original
- Offer an alternate educational facility to students of Indian border areas who formerly availed the opportunity of receiving higher education in Tibet
- Accomplish gains of teaching and scope of research in traditional subjects in a framework of the modern University system of education with the provision for award of degrees in Tibetan studies

These objectives dictated a radically different character to this university compared to other Indian universities.

In order to preserve ancient Indian sciences and literature in the Tibetan language, but lost in the original, the university established the first of its research unit, the Restoration Unit, in 1980. This unit is engaged in restoring lost Sanskrit texts on the basis of their Tibetan translations. To make knowledge embedded in these classical languages available to the masses, the university established a second research unit, the Translation Unit, in 1987. This unit is engaged in translating Sanskrit/Tibetan texts into Hindi and/or English. In 1980s a need was felt to compile a Tibetan Sanskrit dictionary that would be helpful in restoring lost Sanskrit texts from their Tibetan translations. The work of compiling the dictionary was started by the university in 1981 through the third research unit, the Dictionary Unit, established in 1986. The dictionary was successfully completed in 2005 in sixteen volumes. At the same time, a fourth research unit, the Rare Buddhist Texts Research Unit, was established to publish the critical editions of a number of Buddhist Tantric texts in Sanskrit as well as in Tibetan. The bi-annual journal *Dhiḥ* supplies valuable information on rare Buddhist texts. The university also has several noted publications.

All this has gained the university the reputation of an international organization devoted to the re-vitalization of Tibetan Buddhism and culture. Thus, the Central University of Tibetan Studies is fulfilling the dream of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and HH the fourteenth Dalai Lama of preserving the Tibetan educational system for Tibetans and those belonging to the Himalayan region.

In an attempt to preserve the traditional way of teaching Buddhist philosophy, the following ancient Tibetan monasteries were relocated in India:

- The Sakya tradition has relocated its seat (founded in 1073 CE) to Dehradun, India, where Sakya College continues the traditional Sakya curriculum, with courses of study lasting up to thirteen years.
- Rumtek monastery in Sikkim was founded in the early 1960s and offers training in the Karma Kagyu lineage.
- Both the Nyingma and Gelug traditions have rebuilt their universities in South India. In Bylakuppe, the Nyingma scholastic center of Payul (one of the Six Great Nyingma Universities) has been rebuilt as Namdroling, and is today home to more than 2,000 monks. Furthermore, at the beginning of the 1970s, Penor Rinpoche founded a Commentarial School (*dshad brwa*) within Namdroling, which now trains 400 students. The great Nyingma monastery of Mindroling was also rebuilt in Dehradun, beginning in 1965.

Thus, there are almost forty educational institutions including colleges, universities and research institutes in India running various courses in Buddhist Studies either as full-fledged Departments of Buddhist Studies or partly as Pali, Mahayana Buddhism, Tibetan or Tantric Buddhism, Buddhist Philosophy, Ancient Indian and Asian Studies.

Major Publications Related to Buddhist Studies

During the last century, much literature has been published in the field of Buddhist Studies in the form of the publication of the Devanagari Tipiṭaka and its commentaries by the Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, Nalanda; the Buddhist Sanskrit Texts Series published by the Mithila Institute of Post-graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, Darbhanga; and an entire set of the Tipiṭaka with commentaries and sub-commentaries in 140 volumes from the Vipassana Research Institute, Dhammagiri, Igatpuri. The Central University of Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, has brought out major publications in the field of Buddhist Studies with special emphasis on the Tibetan language. Besides this, many institutes and publishing houses are engaged in Buddhist publication. Thus, many important events have unfolded in the field of Pali and Buddhist Studies.

At present, there is a feeling of rejuvenation in the field of Buddhist Studies all over India. Buddhist institutions worldwide are coming together to form an association to assist each other and it is expected that the same will happen in India as well.

Emergence of Buddhist Cultural Identity

The old surviving Buddhist communities of the north-east and the Himalayan regions are practicing Buddhism mixed with Hindu or local practices. However, the case of the modern Buddhist community emerging after the 1956 mass conversion is different. A majority of those converted did so due to their disenchantment with the discriminating practices of their formal religion, Hinduism. When they converted to Buddhism, they brought with them the baggage of Hindu culture and were totally unaware of the Buddhist way of life. Change in religion does not simply mean change in ideology. It also signifies change in behavior.

As shown earlier, loss of cultural distinction from other religions was one of the causes of the decline of Buddhism in India. Anticipating this danger, Dr Ambedkar took the utmost care to maintain the distinct identity of Buddhism from Hinduism, the legacy of which was deeply rooted in the minds of the Dalits. He introduced to them the Buddhist form of worship through a booklet entitled *Bauddha Puja Paṭha,* adopting the Theravada prayers in Pali language along with their Marathi translation.

In order to complete the unfinished task of Dr Ambedkar to provide the Buddhist community with a set of Buddhist rituals, a relevant booklet was published by the Buddhist Society of India in 1968. The prime objective of this booklet was to bring uniformity in the Buddhist rites and rituals throughout India and to establish solidarity between India and other Buddhist countries. These rites are made simple and intelligible to common people.

The modern Buddhist society of Maharashtra performs various rituals in a unique form. These rituals include initiation into Buddhism, the naming ceremony, beginning of education, engagement, wedding ceremony, land worship, house-warming, opening ceremony, establishment of the Buddha image, funeral, death memorial, birthday and death anniversary. The presence of monks is not mandatory for performing these rituals. They can be performed even with the help of trained lay people called Bauddhacaryas. All the rituals are performed in the presence of images of the Buddha and Dr Ambedkar. While performing these rituals a conscious effort is made to avoid Hindu religious symbols such as oil lamps, saffron and turmeric powder. For some modern Buddhists, rituals are important only from the social and cultural point of view. They do not have any religious significance as in other theist religions.

As for other religious activities, weekly group prayers, celebration of special occasions such as the birthday of Dr Ambedkar, the day of Vesakha, the day of mass conversion, and the day Dr Ambedkar passed away, are common to Neo-Buddhists throughout the country. In order to inculcate Buddhist culture among the Buddhist masses, a number of Samaṇera workshops are organized by voluntary organizations with public support. Great enthusiasm is also visible in the construction of new viharas, community halls and libraries. Pilgrimage to Buddhist religious sites is becoming more and more popular. Indeed, a number of individuals and organizations are working for the preservation, restoration and promotion of such sites. However, much has to be done to save Buddhist sites from undesirable human interference, encroachment by non-Buddhists, mismanagement and negligence. Pali is becoming a symbol of Buddhist cultural identity resulting in growing enthusiasm to learn the language. The quest for identity is even visible in a minor act of naming a child: nowadays Buddhist names are preferred. It is also reflected in various art forms such as painting, music and theatre. Thus, through various cultural symbols such as rites and rituals, places of worship, language and art the modern Buddhist community of India is trying to assert its cultural identity.

Buddhism in the Future

Dr Ambedkar in his essay *Buddha and Future of His Religion* (1950, reprint 2003) expressed optimism for the revival of Buddhism. According to him, due to the indifferent attitude of Hindus towards the lacunae of their own religion:

> Hinduism will lapse and cease to be a force of governing life. There will be void, which will have the effect of disintegrating the Hindu Society. Hindus then will be forced to take a more positive attitude. When they do so, they can turn to nothing except Buddhism (Ambedkar 2003:103).

Another reason for the possible revival of Buddhism in India in Dr Ambedkar's view is that Buddhism gives mental and moral relief to the millions of Backward Classes and the Scheduled Castes, which Hinduism does not. Dr Ambedkar was confident that Buddhism is the only religion that the new world can embrace, for it satisfies all the four conditions of a true religion (*Saddhamma*), viz. being governed by righteousness, being in accordance with reason, recognizing the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity and not glorifying poverty.

Thus, Buddhism appears to have a bright future owing to its inherent strength and the weakness of Hinduism. However, one must bear in mind that this alone is not going to suffice. For, in the past, in spite of its inherent strength, Buddhism has suffered at the hands of orthodox religions. Hence, one is forced to go beyond this to look for other conditions for the possible resurgence of Buddhism.

Trevor Ling (1979:229-241) has discussed the potential resurgence of Buddhism. According to him, although Buddhism does not appear to have potential on account of its being a tiny fraction of society, there are conditions in modern India that can prove favourable. He enumerates two requirements for Buddhist resurgence – a receptive local situation and the presence of a significant and effective agent of Buddhism. Their right combination is necessary for the actualization of this potential. He also expresses the need for the sufficient amount of predisposition and ability of Buddhism to provide an alternative to the present condition.

Trevor Ling (1979:237) regards two features of the present situation which can prove favourable to the growth of Buddhism - educated people, who can think critically about the Indian traditional society and traditional ideas, and those educated people who have their cultural origin in a tribal non-Hindu community. According to him, the first type became disenchanted with their Hindu tradition and found a better alternative in the form of Buddhism. The first type includes those who have personal devotion to Buddhism but no institutional commitment and are unlikely to convert to Buddhism. The second type have an active involvement in a Buddhist community and are likely to encourage others to do so.

Ling believes that Buddhism, with its emphasis on reason and accommodative approach with respect to local folk beliefs, can provide a better option to the educated tribal young people who find it difficult to maintain the old tribal superstitious beliefs on the one hand and to abandon their age-old culture on the other. The case of the Sherdukpan tribe in Arunachal Pradesh "who have developed an interesting synthesis of Buddhist and tribal ideas" (Elwin quoted in Trevor Ling 1979:239) is mentioned by him as an interesting example of this type.

Trevor Ling (1979:239) suggests that if Buddhism is to become a living religious tradition, the presence of the right kind of individual or a group to provide a Buddhist presence and to introduce Buddhist teaching and practice is essential. At present there is a highly motivated Ambedkarite Buddhist community providing a strong and active Buddhist presence in India. Its ideology is inspired by the thoughts of Dr Ambedkar and to a certain extent backed by other Buddhist movements led by individuals such as the Ven. Sanghatakshita, Acharya SN Goenka, HH the fourteenth Dalai Lama, etc. These individuals are also responsible for the spread of Buddhist teaching and practices within and without the Buddhist fold.

Although the Vipassana meditation movement is successful in reaching people from different regions, classes and creed, it has remained individualistic and has not become engaged socially. On the other hand, in the absence of a charismatic national leadership the Ambedkarite Buddhist movement has remained restricted to the state of Maharashtra and the Mahr community. In spite of these limitations, one can see some positive elements emerging from the present situation. The Vipassana movement has succeeded to a great extent in creating an atmosphere where misconceptions about Buddhist teachings and practices are being removed, and Buddhism is seen as having a more positive outlook in the non-Buddhist communities than ever before. In the case of the Dalit Buddhist movement, instead of a central leadership, one finds the emergence of a decentralized local leadership with a host of Buddhist leaders working at the area-level.

What is now required is the networking and mutual co-ordination among these scattered, mostly individualistic efforts, to have a larger impact. There is a need for Dalit leadership to overcome mutual differences to unite in the spirit of the Saṅgha. There is a need for Neo-Buddhists to leave behind the baggage of casteism and to wholehartedly encourage and embrace fellow Dalits. There is also a need to have an interfaith and intercultural dialogue while continuing the struggle for social and political empowerment, so that a new revolution can be brought about through peaceful and righteous means. Social and religious Buddhist organizations should work more rigorously and with proper direction to not only sustain but also promote Buddhist culture among the uninformed Buddhist masses, which are still unaware of their rich heritage.

Buddhist media and educational institutions can play a vital and constructive role in this regard. As stated by E Zelliot (1979:403), "the attraction of Buddhism for the new converts was not purely its negation of Hinduism. The image of Buddhism as a rational, ethical, creative, egalitarian religion, full of compassion for all mankind, had been spread through India by scholars, popular writers and participants alike." This spells out in very clear terms the significance of the scholarly and creative community, along with practitioners, and highlights the importance of institutions such as universities and the media.

However, if Buddhism has to make any real headway in India it cannot afford to neglect missionary activities, a universal trend. In fact, with this very vision, Dr Ambedkar urged that Buddhist monks should not only guide but also serve the society, for which they should have a missionary attitude as "without a Mission Buddhism can hardly spread" (Ambedkar 2003:107). Thus it has now become the need of the hour to empower the Buddhist Order in India. This empowerment would be in terms of religious as well as secular education, self-cultivation through meditation, missionary training and inculcation of core human values. This, however, is not the sole responsibility of the monks as the community of lay followers has to ensure progress by taking all possible measures.

Trevor Ling (1979:239 ff), points out that although Buddhism in India has the disadvantage of not being a state religion, it still has the potential to exist without state patronage as can be seen in the Buddhist population of north-east India. The resurgent Buddhist community of Maharashtra strengthens this assumption. The Buddhist resurgence in the modern period is qualitatively different from that in the Buddha's time for then it percolated through the higher classes to the lower classes whereas the direction of the present resurgence is from the lower classes to the higher classes. It is the unfailing commitment of the society that is making the Buddhist resurgence in India possible. If this social commitment remains unhindered, then there is no doubt that Buddhism has a bright future in its motherland, India.

Notes

1 For the date of the historic Buddha, traditional chronology and new interpretation, refer "*Cooking the Buddhist Books: The Implications of the New Dating of the Buddha for the History of Early Indian Buddhism*", Charles S. Prebish, Journal of Buddhist Ethics, 2008:3, pp. 3-21.

2 The non-Pali sources such as the Dul ba of Tibetans, Lokottaravada account and Asvaghoa gave different locations in Rajagaha of the First Council. See B Jinananda (in PV Bapat 1997: 32)

3 *sabbapapassa akaraam, kusalassa upasampada / sacittapariyodapanam eta buddhana sāsanam //*

4 PV Bapat 1997: 96.

5 AC Banerjee 1997: 98.

6 Cf. Madhyamakakarika 1: *anirodham anutpādam anucchedam aśāśvatam / anekārtham anānārtham anāgamam anirgamam //*

[7] Sekoddesaika, p. 3: *gdhrakue yatha sastra prajnaparamitnnaye / tatha mantranaye prokta sridhanye dharmadesana //*

[8] BR Ambedkar 2003: 395 ff.

[9] Gaikwad, Suneel 2010.

[10] In his book *Kya Buddha Dukhavadi The*? Goenka rejects the objection that the Buddha's teaching is pessimistic. In his other book *Rajadharma*, he refutes the claim that India's ultimate loss of independence was a result of the Buddha's impractical adherence to non-violence.

[11] "My heart fills with gratitude to the traditional Dhamma teachers of Burma who, through an unbroken chain of teachers to disciples, kept this teaching in its pristine purity from generation to generation, not permitting its adulteration by the use of any words, colors, forms or imagination." SN Goenka (2006:7)

[12] "*Pariyatti* is to give us inspiration, to show us the path, but *paipatti* (practice) will take us to the final goal. Sometimes *pariyatti* can cause confusion due to incorrect translation or interpretation; or because the student who is reading it does not have the capacity to understand what is being said. These problems can be removed by *paipatti.* ... To me *paipatti* is of utmost importance." SN Goenka (2006:114 ff)

[13] Trevor Ling 1979: 240, n. 4.

[14] BR Ambedkar 2003:478-486.

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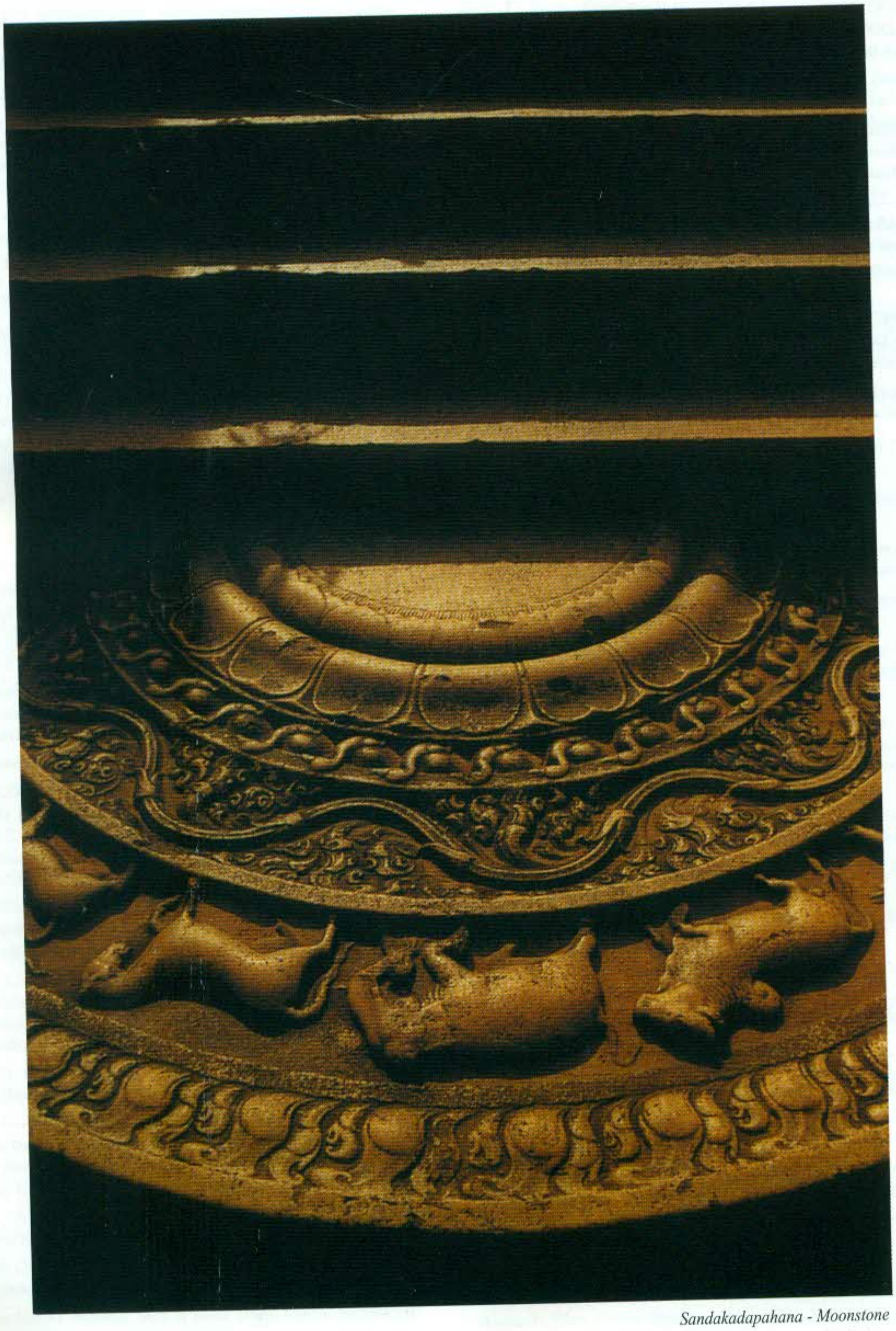

Sandakadapahana - Moonstone
(Anuradhapura - Sri Lanka)

ESSAY 4

Buddhism in Sri Lanka

Rev. Nabirittankadavara Gnanaratana Thera
Asanga Tilakaratne
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Introduction

Sri Lanka has been traditionally considered a stronghold of Theravada Buddhism. Since its first official introduction to Sri Lanka in the third century BCE Buddhism has remained the leading religious tradition of the people of the country although at times this historical position was threatened by political and ideological forces coming from outside. The history of the island is inseparable from the history of Buddhism, and Buddhism has been the defining factor of the culture of Sinhala society in particular and of the entire Sri Lanka society in general.

A study of Buddhism of Sri Lanka forms an important aspect in the study of world Buddhism for the reason that it is in this country that Theravada Buddhism reached maturity and evolved its own ideology in spite of the fact that Theravada started in India immediately after the parinirvana of the Buddha. Ever since the Theravada tradition[1] was established in Sri Lanka in the third century BCE we do not hear much about its Indian counterpart. Although there is sporadic evidence to the existence of the Theravada tradition in India over the next seven to eight centuries, the arrival of Buddhaghosa, the great commentator who translated Sinhala commentaries into Pali in the fifth century CE, suggests that Sri Lanka, which was more often known as the "Island of the Sinhalas" (*Sinhala-dipa*), had become the centre of the Theravada tradition. The great monastic centre of Anuradhapura, Maha-vihara, had become by this time the leading Theravada monastic centre for the entire Buddhist world. As we will see in the course of this essay, the Sri Lanka school of Theravada tradition played a crucial role in determining the character of the same school in the South-east Asia region. Consequently, a study of Buddhism in Sri Lanka is essentially a study of the evolution of the Theravada school.

In this essay we will discuss the arrival and the spread of Buddhism in the island, and its current situation. As the context for this discussion we will review briefly the evidence to the existence of various other religious beliefs and practices prevalent at this very early stage of the history of the island. We will move on to outline the key events and the developments in the history of Sri Lankan Buddhism from the Anuradhapura period[2] to the time of the arrival of Europeans and their religion, Christianity, in the early sixteenth century (1505 CE). The nearly four and half centuries of Western colonialism starting in the sixteenth century and continuing till the middle of the twentieth century constitute a decisive period in Sri Lankan Buddhism. The last part of the discussion will be focussed on the post-independent period up to the present. The discussion will be concluded with an assessment of the state of Buddhism in Sri Lanka both in its local and global contexts.

Introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka

Buddhism reached Sri Lanka in the third century BCE, during the reign of King Devanampiya Tissa, a contemporary of King Asoka (third century BCE) in India. The latter patronized what Buddhist history records to be the third *sangayana* (council). The *Mahavamsa* ("great chronicle"), the key historical source[3] of Sri Lanka Theravada tradition written by a Mahavihara monk named Mahanama in the sixth century CE, says that after this *sangayana* the messengers of the Dhamma (dhammaduta) were dispatched to nine different regions within and outside India. Sri Lanka, or the "Island of the Sinhalas" (*Sinhala dipa*),[4] is one among these nine regions/countries to receive Buddhism. According to the *Mahavamsa,* Arahant Mahinda, a son of Asoka, came to the island with a group of fellow missionaries. Archaeologists have shown that there is reliable inscriptional evidence to establish the historicity of this event.

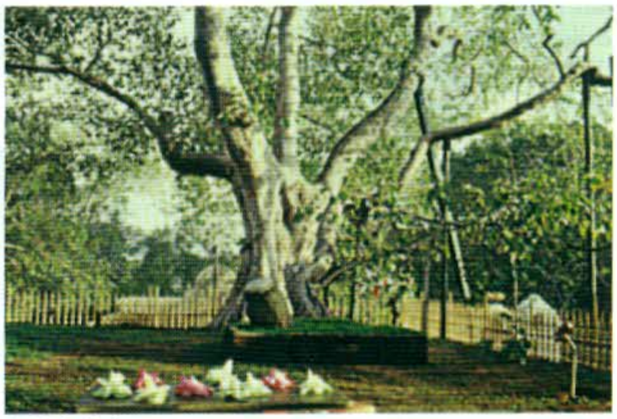
Although this particular event is described as the first-ever introduction of Buddhism to the country, many historians believe that Mahinda's arrival was only the official introduction of Buddhism, and that it is very likely that people knew about Buddhism earlier. The fact that the *Mahavamsa* mentions the presence, in pre-Buddhist Sri Lanka, of many religious beliefs, including certain Indian religions, is taken as evidence supportive of this belief. Among such religions, in addition to the various guardian deities of hunters, smiths etc., there are references to Brahmins, Ajivakas (followers of

Makkhali Gosala, one of the six religious teachers who were contemporaries of the Buddha) and Niganthas (Jain followers),[5] the religions popular in India along with Buddhism. Although it is likely that Buddhism too may have been in evidence during this period, there is no mention of any Buddhist shrines or of any Buddhist monks or nuns in pre-Buddhist Sri Lanka. The fact of the matter may be that while there were many religious beliefs, both of local and Indian origin during this period, there was not any particular religion with wide-spread popularity. It is Buddhism, with strong patronage from both India and Sri Lanka, which was brought by Arahant Mahinda that filled this gap.

According to the chronicles, Arahant Mahinda arrived in the country during the reign of King Devanampiya-Tissa (247-207 BCE). It is said that the king and the bhikkhu met at Missaka-pabbata (now called Mihintale), a place east of Anuradhapura. Having listened to the Dhamma taught by Arahant Mahinda the king and his group took refuge in the Triple Gem, the formal procedure of becoming a follower of the Buddha. All records suggest that the new religion rapidly became popular. The absence of any organized form of religious life till this point of time may have been one of the major factors that contributed to this rapid popularity. Furthermore, it seems that the people followed the lead of their king: first it was the immediate family and the attendants of the king; subsequently it was people at large of the island. Among the important preliminary measures taken by the king with regard to Buddhism were the offering of the Mahameghavana, a park within the city limits, for the use of the Sangha, the building of the first ever stupa (pagoda), namely, Thuparama, enshrining the bodily relics of the Buddha, demarcation of the boundary (*sima*) for the performance of monastic functions of the Sangha, and provision for the rehearsal of the Vinaya by bhikkhu Arittha, a Sri Lanka native who was given initial and higher admission[6] by Arahant Mahinda and who studied the Vinaya in this country. The last two events need some further clarification. The significance of the first event, namely, the demarcation of a *sima* for monastic functions, signifies the formalization of the establishment of the Buddhist monastic order in the country. Without the monastic order it is impossible to think about the presence of the Buddha Sasana ("organization" of Buddhism) in any location. In Arahnat Mahinda's own words, the establishment of a *sima* was tantamount to locating firmly the Sasana of the Buddha in the country. The king supported the act wholeheartedly by allocating necessary space and other requirements for the function. The second, the act of a native of the country studying the Vinaya in the country itself and rehearsing it, signified the real beginning of the Sri Lanka Sangha.[7]. Arahant Mahinda described the significance of this act as "the Sasana taking roots in the country". In other words, this act meant that both the Buddha Sasana and the Sangha were made national institutions with distinct identities.

Among the other important events that took place during the life-time of Arahant Mahinda and King Devanampiya Tissa was the arrival of Bhikkhuni Sanghamitta in order to start the female monastic (bhikkhuni) order, and the planting in Anuradhapura of the branch of the Bodhi tree brought by Sanghamitta. The conferment of initial and higher admission on Queen Anula, the sister-in-law of the king, and her retinue, and the simultaneous planting of the Bodhi sapling marked the beginning of the bhikkhuni Sasana in the country. Along with the Bodhi tree[8] there came a large group of people specialized in various arts and crafts who were assigned to undertake the physical protection of the

Thuparamaya


Sri Maha Bodhiya

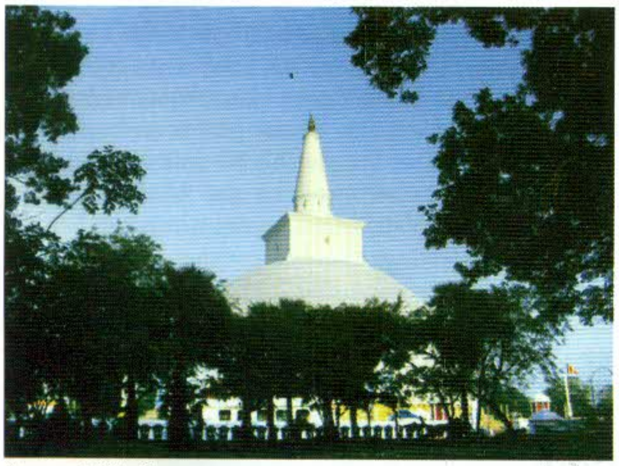
sacred tree. The subsequent history of Sri Lanka shows that this group of people occupied a prestigious position in society that continued for centuries; the task assigned to them contributing immensely for the growth of Buddhist culture. The Bodhi became a symbol of Buddhism and Buddhist culture in Sri Lanka and remains as a testimony to the dedication of the people who protected it through the centuries from enemies, animals and natural calamities in spite of the various upheavals Buddhism had to face in its long, chequered history. The alms-bowl of the Buddha that was brought to Sri Lanka along with his bodily relics to be enshrined in Thuparama was another sacred object received and kept with utmost respect in his palace by Devanmpiya Tissa in his palace. As the subsequent history reveals, this relic was considered to be a symbol of the ownership of the country and consequently became an object closely connected with the vicissitudes of the history of Sri Lanka.

All historical records are unanimous about the rapid spread of Buddhism all over the island. Subsequently, Bodhi saplings were planted in all four directions of the island. This distribution may be taken as a symbol of the spread of Buddhism in the country as well as the unification of the country. The chronicles are unanimous in claiming that the Buddha visited the island three times. In these visits, it is believed that the Buddha sanctified some places by visiting and sitting in meditation with the bhikkhus. There are eight such places which are revered by Buddhists even today; subsequently the number has increased to sixteen. These places are scattered all over the island. The significance, again, is more symbolic. It is only a matter of religious belief that the Buddha visited the island thrice. Whether or not these places were really sanctified by the Buddha is contingent on the veracity of the earlier claim. What is important in this context is not whether or not the Buddha visited the island, but that the Sri Lanka Buddhist tradition wished to identify itself with this historical narrative without any major revision. Both Arahant Mahinda and his sister Sanghamitta dedicated their lives to the upliftment of the Sasana of the country. Arahant Mahinda passed away in the eighth year of the reign of Uttiya, the brother of Devanampiya Tissa, and the Theri Sanghamitta the next year.

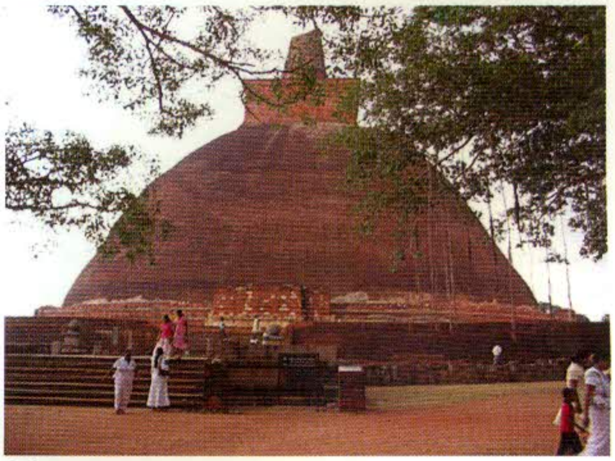
The Bhikkhuni Sasana initiated by the Theri Sanghamitta flourished during the Anuradhapura period, and there are references to great Theris who excelled in knowledge and virtue. The *Dipavamsa*[9] contains a list of such great bhikkhunis such as Saddhammanandi, Soma, Giriddhi, Dasiaya, Dhammapala, Mahila, etc. who lived during the early period. Chinese Buddhist history refers to a bhikkhuni named Devasara who went from Sri Lanka and established the bhikkhuni order in China[10]. Toward the end of the Anuradhapura period there are sporadic references to the bhikkhuni order, and it appears that the Sri Lanka bhikkhuni Sangha could not survive the invasion of Magha, which terminated the Polonnaruwa kingdom (see below on recent efforts at re-establishment of the bhikkhuni order).

Rohana: The Southern Centre of Buddhism

Rohana, or the southern region, has been very important in the history of the island both politically and religiously. It was one of the earliest settlements of Aryans who inhabited the island, and began as the "Rohana village" which subsequently came to signify the entire southern region. It is one of the places where a sapling of the Anuradhapura Bodhi tree was planted. As Walpola Rahula comments, throughout the history of Ceylon Rohana was the last refuge and sanctuary of freedom.



Ruwanvali Maha Saya



Jethavanaramaya

Whenever there was danger at Anuradhapura, either from foreign invasion or from internal conflicts, kings, ministers, monks and others who desired freedom and protection took shelter in the south[11]. The importance of the region for Buddhism was immense. The capital city of the region is often mentioned as the "great village" or Mahagama which gradually grew up to be a leading centre of Buddhism, where such large monasteries as Tissamaharama and Cittala-pabbata, founded by king Kavantis in the second century BCE, flourished during the Anuradhapura period. The great Sinhala Buddhist hero, King Dutugemunu, had his beginnings in Rohana in close association with the Buddhist monks.

Period of Growth and Evolution

The new religion introduced in this manner developed and gradually evolved to be a uniquely Sri Lankan tradition by the end of the Anuradhapura period. The history of Buddhism during this period, however, was not one smooth flow. The Sangha society not only expanded but also became fragmented. Rulers generally supported the Sasana as a whole, but some rulers supported only certain sections of the Sangha. There were invasions from South India, and consequently several times the country was under foreign rule, usually with undesirable results for the Sangha and the religion. Overall, the Anuradhapura period marked one of development of Buddhism.

Devanampiya Tissa was succeeded by his brother Uttiya, who built stupas to deposit the bodily relics of Arahant Mahinda and Theri Sanghamitta, was known for his piety. However, barely seven decades had passed when the first invasion of the country occurred by forces from South India that consequently ruled the country for the next seven decades. King Elara who ruled the country for about forty-five years (145-101 BCE) is the best-known of these rulers, for he was the one who was defeated by King Dutugemunu in a duel. Dutugemunu (101-77 BCE) is revered as the hero who rescued the country from foreign power, thus saving the Buddhist religion and culture that had already become the defining character of the country. Dutugemunu's reign was marked by intense Buddhist religious activity and flourishing of the Sasana. Among the many religious monuments built by the king was what is known as "the great stupa" (Pali: *maha-thupa*), the Ruvanmali-dagoba, is the most revered of all the dagobas in the country. The chronicles record the religious and educational activities of both great learned theras and theris who lived during this period. Adikaram, who studied the early history of Buddhism in the country, concludes his discussion of Dutugemunu in the following words: "Rendered majestic by the limitless beneficence of the most powerful monarch Ceylon ever saw and resplendent with the brilliance of these theras and theris, learned and of stainless purity of character, this period stands out unique in the history of Buddhism in Ceylon".[12]

Dutugemunu was succeeded by his brother Saddhatissa (77-59 BCE) who continued his good work and was himself known for his dedication to the religion. In less than two decades there was another invasion by a group of South Indian invaders who ousted the incumbent King Vattagamani and ruled the country among five of them for fourteen years, till Vattagamani regained power again in 29 BCE and ruled till 17 BCE. Much of the unfortunate interim period was also marked by a long drought, resultant famine, and intensified internal struggles. The second spell of Vattagamani's rule is very important in the history of Sri Lankan Buddhism in particular and in the history of Theravada in general for two reasons. Firstly, what is important in the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka is that it marks the beginning of the initial division of the Sri Lanka Sangha. Up to this point the Sangha was represented by one unitary tradition called Mahavihara ("great monastery"), named after the monastery established by Arahant Mahinda in Anuradhapura, which had subsequently become synonymous with the indigenous Theravada Sangha. As we will see later, Mahavihara meant not merely a tradition of the Sangha but also a textual and interpretive tradition which served as the basis for the Theravada tradition worldwide. What happened during the reign of Vattagamani was that he constructed in the precincts of the Mahavihara a monastery with a dagoba, known as Abhayagiri, and donated it as a gift to a particular monk who had helped him during his period of exile when he was preparing to recapture power. The usual custom among the Sangha in accepting property is to accept it not as a personal gift but as one given to the Sangha as a community. The Mahavihara Sangha perceived this act as a violation of the Vinaya (disciplinary code of the Sangha), and took action against him accordingly. The proper behaviour on the part of the guilty would have been to accept his wrongdoing and hand over what is given back to the Sangha (upon which the Sangha would return it to him to use as common property). But this was not done, and instead, he defied the order and consequently was expelled from the Sangha. His pupil, one Bahalamassu Tissa, angered by the Mahavihara act, moved to the new monastery with his followers and started functioning as a separate group. This subsequently became the "Abhayagiri nikaya" (sect). For the first time, the Mahavihara Sangha found that they had a rival who could vie for royal support and patronage.

During the period of drought, famine, internal struggles and foreign domination numerous people, including monks and nuns, died. Many monks fled the country to neighbouring India in order to save their lives and also to keep intact the teaching of the Buddha, which they carried in their memory. Some monks risked their life and remained in the country amidst hardships for the same purpose of preserving the oral tradition of the Dhamma. Once the troubles were over and the country regained normalcy those who left returned, and the first thing they did was to compare their memories, and found to their relief that their memories tallied perfectly. Nevertheless, this awakened the monks to the danger of keeping the Dhamma in mere memory, so they decided to commit the Dhamma into writing. Now, as the Mahavihara Sangha no longer had the royal support, they had to find a remote place in the hills away from the capital and had to undertake their work with the patronage of a regional chief. The decision made by the Mahavihara Sangha in Anuradhapura at a very early period of Sri Lanka Buddhist history proved to be momentous, for it gave a concrete shape to the word of the Buddha (*buddha vacana*) and also marked the conclusion of the evolution and growth of the Theravada canon. It is the version thus finalized at this gathering that Theravada history recognizes as the fourth council (sangayana). What is written down at this gathering constitutes the oldest available version of the word of the Buddha and canon which is in the Pali language. Pali is the closest we have to the dialect spoken by the Buddha, accepted unanimously by the entire Theravada school found traditionally in the South and Southeast Asian regions.

Before commencing the writing of the texts there arose among the members of the Sangha a debate as to whether the learning of the Dhamma (*pariyatti*) or its practice (*patipatti)* is the "root" of the Sasana[13]. Those who were "the preachers of the Dhamma" claimed it was the learning, whereas "those who wore rug-robes" (i.e. meditators) maintained it was the practice. It is said that the preachers of the Dhamma won the day. Undoubtedly this whole debate and the subsequent victory are to be understood in the context in which the relative worth of those who learned the Dhamma was highlighted. Nevertheless, it is believed that this shift of emphasis from practice to learning marked a new attitude (the desirability of which is debated) in the Theravada tradition.

The next four centuries elapsed without any foreign political interference. The period as a whole marked one of development for the Sasana. A striking example illustrative of the influence of Buddhism on the political and ethical philosophy of the country comes from this early period. Amandagamani (78-89 CE) for the first time in the history of the country issued the order of non-killing (*ma-ghata*) which had been followed by many subsequent rulers till the end of the Anuradhapura period. Even though kindness to animals was not unheard of before among the Sri Lanka rulers, this was the first time it came as a royal order. Among the subsequent kings who followed Amandagamani's example are Voharikatissa (269-291 CE), who abolished physical torture as a punishment, Silakala (524-537 CE), Aggabodhi I (658-674 CE) and Kassapa III (717-724 CE).

Although the Sangha as a whole flourished, the gap between the two schools of the Sangha, Mahavihara and Abhayagiri, grew wider during this period. While the Mahavihara, orthodox in its outlook, adhered to the Theravada canon uncompromisingly, Abhayagiri was open to other Buddhist schools and literary traditions. Along with Pali they also used Sanskrit, which was the language used by the Mahayanists in India. During the reign of Voharika Tissa (269-291 CE) the monks of the Abhayagiri brought forth what is described as "the divergent canon" (*vaitulya-pitaka*) as the true doctrine. The Mahavihara monks rejected this and the king, having learned the presence of the new canon, appointed a Brahmin who was well versed in all branches of learning to investigate the matter. The Brahmin examined the new canon and found that it was not in accordance with the true doctrine and recommended to reject it. The king caused the relevant books to be burnt and disgraced the monks who were involved in promoting this canon. Again, not long after, during the reign of Gothabhaya (309-322 CE) Abhayagirikas brought forth the same canon, this time, with even worse results: the king found sixty monks who accepted this teaching, branded and exiled them from the country. Meanwhile, a group of Abhayagiri monks headed by one Ussiliyatissa, not willing to be a part of this group, left the monastery and settled in the southern Monastery (*Dakkhina vihara*) with his 300 followers. It is from this group that later the chapter called Sagaliya (named after the teacher called Sagala) emerged making it the third and last of the three fraternities of the Sri Lanka Sangha of the Anuradhapura period.

The worst with regard to "the divergent canon" was yet to happen: a young and clever monk from India named Sanghamitta, a pupil of one of those monks who were exiled by Gothabhaya for accepting the divergent canon, was determined to take revenge from the Mahavihara fraternity for the damage caused to his teacher and others. He came to Sri Lanka from India and won the confidence of King Gothabhaya who assigned him to teach his two sons, Jetthatissa and Mahasena. While the elder, Jetthatissa, remained indifferent to Sanghamitta's influence, Mahasena was won over. When Jetthatissa (323-333 CE) succeeded his father, Sanghamitta fled to India fearing for his life. When Mahasena succeeded his brother, Sanghamitta returned and persuaded him to prohibit people from supporting the inhabitants of the Mahavihara and to destroy the entire premises. Although the chronicles say that the king subsequently realized his mistake and rebuilt Mahavihara, his support for the Abhayagiri did not diminish. He built, against much displeasure of the Mahavihara Sangha, Jetavanarama within the Mahavihara premises and gave it to one Kohontissa who was of the Abhayagiriya fraternity. Later this monk was found guilty of a serious violation and was forced to disrobe. The Sagaliya monks moved into the vacated monastery, and ever since have been known as Jetavana chapter (nikaya). After this unfortunate series of events the three chapters continued without much adversity. While the Mahavihara remained the orthodox centre of Theravada tradition, Abhayagiri welcomed divergent views and teachers from India and other parts of the world. Fa Hsien, the Chinese traveller monk who visited Sri Lanka in the early fifth century (400-415 CE), describes Abhayagiri as a great monastic centre crowded by learned and virtuous monks.

During Siri Meghavanna's reign (301-328 CE), the sacred tooth relic of the Buddha was brought to the island. It was accepted by the Abhayagiri with great honour, and gradually became the most precious religious object of the Sri Lanka monarchy. As the subsequent history of the island reveals, the tooth relic became the insignia of the rulership of the country, and this tradition has continued unbroken through the British period to the present. This sacred object has always been in the custody of the king and consequently it was shifted to wherever the seat of the administration had moved. With the shift of the seat of administration to the Kandyan kingdom in the central hills, the last Sinhala kingdom, the sacred tooth relic has been housed there for the last 300 years in Palace of the Tooth Relic. The traditions surrounding the tooth relic are varied and complex. In addition to the vast literary tradition built around the sacred tooth relic, there is a complex web of rites and rituals exemplified in daily observances, culminating in the colourful annual procession conducted in the month of August of every year.

An event which was momentous in significance for the evolution of the Theravada tradition took place at the turn of the fifth century during the reign of Mahanama (406-428 CE). It was the translation[14] of the commentaries into Pali by Buddhaghosa, the greatest Pali commentator. The legend says that Buddhaghosa, who came from India for this very specific purpose, was asked by the Mahavihara Sangha to prove his true Dhamma knowledge, and that he wrote the *Visuddhimagga,* which summarises the entire teaching of the Buddha, in order to satisfy this demand. Buddhaghosa says that he translated into Pali the commentaries that were in the Sinhala language for the sake of the people outside the island. Although this would have been Buddhaghosa's true intention, it is clear that his work became instrumental for the establishment of the Sri Lanka Mahavihara tradition of interpretation of the word of the Buddha as the standard of the Theravada tradition in general. Buddhaghosa's work also represents a new attitude toward the Pali language, upholding that it was the language spoken by the Buddha and hence it is the sacred language of Buddhists. Buddhaghosa is generally believed to have translated commentaries for the first four nikayas of the sutta-pitaka, for the complete Vinaya and Abhidhamma pitakas: Of the fifteen *Khuddaka-nikaya* works, the commentaries to the *Khuddaka-patha, Dhammapada, Sutta-nipata* and the *Jataka* are also attributed to him. Dhammapala, the next commentator of much repute, wrote commentaries to the *Udana, Itivuttaka, Vimana-vatthu, Peta-vatthu, Theragatha, Therigatha* and the *Cariyapitaka*. The commentaries to the *Niddesa, Patisambhidamagga*, and the *Buddhavamsa* were written respectively by Upasena, Mahanama and Buddhadatta. The author of the commentary to the *Apadana* is not known. Although all these commentators are not contemporaries it is believed that all of them lived around two centuries from the arrival of Buddhaghosa.

Buddhaghosa, in particular, repeatedly asserts that he wrote his commentaries following the interpretive tradition of the Mahavihara. The crucial importance of these commentaries is that they are tantamount to the Theravada tradition. It is in these commentaries that one is bound to find the Theravada interpretation of the word of the Buddha. For the orthodox Theravada, Buddhaghosa (and the rest of the commentators) provide the last word on interpreting the teaching of the Buddha. Critical studies on Buddhaghosa are a recent phenomenon. For the orthodox Theravada tradition Buddhaghosa remains the eye through which the Dhamma should be seen.

The Last 500 Years of Anuradhapura

The rest of the Anuradhapura period, which lasted to the end of the ninth century, was marked by another spell of south Indian rule from 433 to 460 CE by six rulers and an invasion during the reign of Sena I, 831-851 CE by a ruler of Pandya kingdom in South India. This invasion, though, did not result in direct domination, but caused massive damage to the country, in particular to the wealth of the Buddhist monasteries. Sena II, successor to Sena I, sent an army to the Pandya country and defeated the king and recovered the wealth and the treasures that were taken there.

While Buddhism continued to be the main source of inspiration for the people for their righteous life, the status of the Sangha seems to have suffered loss during this period for there are records of kings purifying the Sangha. Although the exact nature of these purifications is not known, what may have happened was that those who violated the Vinaya rules may have been removed from the Sangha-hood. The kings of this period are not known to have built any major religious monuments. But there are frequent records to the effect that kings in general renovated and maintained the ancient venerable monuments.

In addition, there are two other developments mentioned fairly frequently in the chronicles: one is, as we have already seen, the intermittent appearance of Mahayana doctrines and tenets, usually supported by the Abhayagiriya sect. During the reign of Aggabodhi I (568-601 CE) a learned monk named Jotipala had come from India and defeated the Mahayana views held by the Abhayagiriya and Jetavana chapters. Along with the Mahayana beliefs there is evidence to believe that Vajrayana practices, too, were introduced to Sri Lanka by the end of this period. For instance, during the reign of Sena I, Vajrayana was introduced to the country by a monk from an Indian sect named Vajraparvata ("Diamond Rock"), and that the king accepted the secret doctrines so introduced. It is recorded that his successor, Sena I, had the Ratana-sutta written on a gold plate and paid homage to it, a practice which resembles those of Vajrayana.

The other development was the increasing Hindu influence in Sri Lanka society. Walpola Rahula quotes the following Mahavamsa account on Sena II: "[He] had a thousand jars of gold filled with pearls and on the top of each placed a costly jewel and presented them to a thousand Brahmins whom he had fed with milk rice in jewelled goblets, and also he gave golden threads".[15] This account foreshadows what was to be expected once the shift of capital city work, which had already begun, was completed and Polonnaruwa became the seat of administration.

Polonnaruwa and After: The Medieval Period

Polonnaruwa had been gaining significance as a major city for some centuries. Aggabodhi IV (667-683 CE), who divided his time between Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, was the first ruler to use the new location as his residence and presumably for administrative purposes. Subsequently Aggabodhi VII (772-777 CE), Udaya I (797-801 CE) and Sena II (853-887 CE), had their seat of administration in Polonnaruwa. From Kassapa IV (898-914 CE) the capital was shifted to the new location and Anuradhapura, which was the capital for about thirteen centuries, was replaced by Polonnaruwa which is located sixty-three miles to the east of Anuradhapura.

The shift from Anuradhapura to Polonnaruwa was basically due to security reasons. By the turn of the tenth century, the country was already weak due to internal political struggles. It is in this background that the Cola invasions came. Mahinda V (982-1017) was the last to rule from Anuradhapura. Later he died in the captivity of the Colas, symbolically marking the end of the Anuradhapura period which was already in turmoil. From the point of view of location there was no significant difference between the two cities. Polonnaruwa was towards the north-east, which contrasted with Anuradhapura, located in the north central part of the island. But the climate was basically the same, both belonging to the dry zone. The economy, which was sustained by a highly sophisticated hydro system, remained the same. In the new capital even larger reservoirs were built by its new rulers in order to strengthen the agricultural economy of the country. It was only at the end of the Polonnaruwa period that the dry zone was gradually abandoned and the southward movement of the seats of administration began.

After a long struggle the Cola power was expulsed by Vijayabahu I, whose rule marks the beginning of the Polonnaruwa period proper. His rule, including the warring times with Colas, spanned from 1055 to 1110. After his death the country once again plunged into difficulties both internal and external, and it was Parakramabahu the Great (1153-1186) who consolidated power and ushered a new era in the history of island. Both were great leaders who not only looked after the economic development of the country but also adopted many measures to resurrect and sustain the already weakened Sasana. Vijayabahu invited monks from Ramanna (Myanmar) and re-established the higher admission (upasampada) among the Sri Lanka Sangha. It is during this period that the king of Ramanna, Anvratha (Anuruddha) sought assistance from Sri Lanka to secure accurate Pali texts. More decisive measures to stabilize the Sasana had to be taken by Parakramabahu the Great. One such measure of long-lasting significance was the unification of the three sects that had been there among the Sangha from the early Anuradhapura period. Along with this unification the king made the leading members of the Sangha, headed by Dimbulagala Maha Kashyapa Thera, to clean the monastic order of the undesirable elements. Having done so, the king established and inscribed in stone a code of good behaviour for the Sangha which is known as "the Polonnaruwa agreement" (*Polonnaru katikavata*).

After Parakramabahu the Great the only other ruler worthy of mention belonging to this period was Nissanka Malla (1187-96) who seems to have done much for the country and the sasana. After a series of weak rulers and repeated Cola and Pandya interventions, Polonnaruwa was captured by Magha from Kalinga (Orissa region). The destruction caused by him was so vast that his rule marked the end of Polonnaruwa which caused much havoc to the Sinhala Buddhist civilization. During the next two centuries the centre of administration was moved to Dambadeniya (1215-1272), and from there to Yapahuwa (1272-1300), Kurunegala (1300-1341), Gampola (1341-1408), and Kotte (1371-1597). Among the noteworthy rulers during this period, Parakramabahu II (1236-1270), who was known for his erudition and scholarship, was the one who saw the end of the Magha rule from Polonnaruwa and re-established a stable administration and ruled from Dambadeniya. His long reign is marked by the rejuvenation of the Sasana and development of Sinhala and Buddhist scholarship. Like Parakramabahu the Great of Polonnaruwa, this king too effected a purification of the Sangha and established a *katikavata* (agreement) which is known as "the Dambadeniya agreement" (*dambadeni katikavata*). The last of the great rulers belonging to the medieval period is Parakramabahu VI who ruled from Kotte (close to the present capital city, Colombo). His long reign, from 1411 to 1466, was a period of economic prosperity, relative peace, as well as great advancements in monastic education and Sinhala and Buddhist literature. By this time there were already regional ruling centres developing in Sitawaka, close to Kotte, and Kandy which is in the central hills and which was to continue as the capital city till the English took power there in 1815.

There were some very clear changes in all spheres of life in the medieval period. Religiously, the influence of Hinduism was the most visible difference during the Polonnaruwa period. The monuments dedicated for Hinduism standing alongside the Buddhist monuments is proof of this. The bull which was considered sacred in Hinduism was no longer seen in the Polonnaruwa moonstones.[16] The presence of learned Brahmins in the courts of the kings was not unusual even in the Anuradhapura period. But in Polonnaruwa the influence of Hinduism assumed a different dimension: Hinduism became a visible aspect of the popular religiosity and Hindu beliefs and practices were mixed with those of Buddhism. This, however, does not mean that the sympathy for such innovations was universal. While there were some members of the Sangha who were sympathetic to such beliefs and learned Hindu literature and "sciences", there were others who rejected them outright. The medieval Sinhala poetry book called *Budugunalankaraya* is a severe attack on Hindu beliefs and practices popular during this period.

As in the Anuradhapura period, the rulers continued to be Buddhists throughout the medieval period. There was, however, a difference. During the Anuradhapura period the kings used to have simple Buddhist names such as Tissa, Kassapa, etc., although some of their behaviour was not always ideally Buddhist. In Polonnaruwa and thereafter we come across names such as Vijayabahu ("Victorious Hand"), Parakramabahu ("Endeavouring Hands"), which have reference to the physical power and majesty of the bearer. In their flavour these names seem to have a closer affinity with their Indian Hindu counterparts than to unassuming Buddhist names. This tendency to have self-glorifying names seems to have continued till the end of the Sinhala royal dynasty in the nineteenth century.

The South Indian invasions continued, and the invasion of Magha, which marked the end of the Polonnaruwa rule, was the most disastrous. It seems that the Sinhala Buddhist culture was never able to recover fully from this attack. The religious, cultural and economic decline caused by this havoc persisted throughout the medieval period and beyond. The foreign relations which were predominantly oriented to neighbouring India from the very early periods started extending also to the South-east Asia region during this period. Unlike relations with South India, which were largely political, these new relations were centred on Buddhism. We will see later that this new direction of relations developed extensively during the early modern period.

Modern Period

The modern period of Sri Lanka history, with new encounters and new challenges, was also a new phase of Buddhism in the country. The seat of administration had moved close to Colombo (Kotte and Sitawaka) by the end of the medieval period. Colombo was gradually becoming an important seaport. Owing to frequent political troubles in the maritime regions, Kandy, which is located in central hills, was also evolving to be a centre of administration not much affected by such troubles.

The real watershed of the beginning of the modern period is the arrival of Portuguese in the country 1505 CE. Maritime regions of the island came under Portuguese control in 1594, and their rule lasted till 1698. The Dutch took over from the Portuguese and ruled the maritime regions from 1640 to 1796 till they were replaced by the British to whom the entire country was handed over by the Sinhala chiefs on the March 2, 1815, at Mahanuvara by signing the Udarata Givisuma ("Up-country Treaty"). The Portuguese brought Christianity (Roman Catholicism) to the country. By the end of their rule they had been successful in converting a good number of people in the western and north-western maritime regions to their faith. The story of their plundering and destruction of Buddhist monasteries and atrocities in areas where people resisted conversion are too well-known to list here[17]. The Portuguese were driven out by the Dutch who brought along with them Protestantism. Subsequently the English introduced their own brand of Protestantism.

This European encounter had several noteworthy features. Up to that point the people in Sri Lanka were accustomed only to people from India or to those from Asia such as occasional Chinese pilgrims who shared cultures similar in many respects to their own. Even though Hinduism was different from Buddhism, the two religions shared a lot. In the case of the Europeans, neither the culture nor the religion had any similarities with local religions. The European culture, ways of behaviour, etc., were quite new to Sri Lankan culture. The religion, monotheism with its associated absolutism, was also new. Added to this was the attitude they brought with them about conversion. Up to this point, Sri Lanka society had not experienced any efforts at conversion, for Hinduism and Buddhism had been basically confined to Tamil and Sinhala communities respectively. Although Buddhists seem to have adopted some Hindu practices, that did not amount to conversion from one religion to another. As Gananath Obeyesekere, an eminent sociologist, has pointed out, till the arrival of Christianity with the Portuguese, in Sri Lanka, Sinhalas were Buddhist and, to a very great extent, *vice versa.*[18] This equation was changed when the Portuguese converted some Sinhalas to Christianity.

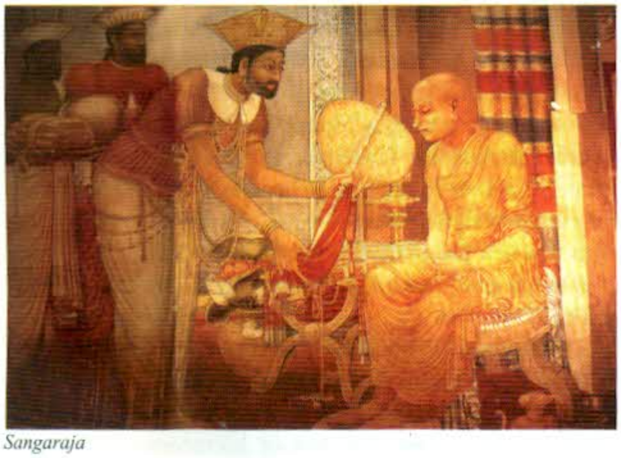
Extremely harsh methods adopted by these Western colonial powers for conversion were unheard of before by the Sri Lankan people. Although they had experienced atrocities before, perpetrated by invaders like Magha, and had seen the destruction of sacred places, the motive behind such activities was not religious. At least the Hindu invaders were not keen on converting people to Hinduism. With the Europeans, the situation was completely different: conversion was an essential aspect of the whole colonization project. The Dutch and the English did not adhere to such violent methods, however. Theirs were indirect and subtle to which we will refer later.

The status of the religion, in particular that of the Sangha, was declining rapidly. Even before the arrival of the Europeans there were occasions where there were no bhikkhus with higher admission (upasampada) in the country. As we saw earlier, the last time when the Sangha was flourishing was the reign of Parakramabahu VI of Kotte under whose long and stable reign religion, culture and literature reached high standards. During the reign of Buvanekabahu VI (1469-77) monks from Myanmar came to Sri Lanka in search of higher admission for the state of the Sangha in that country had deteriorated. They received higher admission on the Kelani (Kalyani) river at a place specifically demarcated for the purpose, and the consequent revival of the Sasana in Myanmar is a well-known story in the history of Buddhism in Myanmar. By the arrival of Europeans later in the century, however, the decline had begun, and with the attacks by the Portuguese the monastic centres and the Sangha suffered immensely. Toward the latter part of the seventeenth century the state of the Sangha had further deteriorated, and it is reported that king Wimaladharmasuriya II (1687-1707) had to bring the Sangha with higher admission from Rakkhanga (a region in Myanmar). This does not seem to have been very effective. By the eighteenth century again there were no monks with higher admission in the country. The monkhood had deteriorated to such an extent that only an intermediate group of people called *ganinnanse*, who were neither monks nor civilians, were left. It is to their credit that they preserved the monasteries, the valuable libraries and the material assets belonging to those monasteries while maintaining the minimum standards of Buddhist religiosity.

Revival of Buddhism

This time the honour of reintroducing the higher admission to the Sangha and rejuvenating the religion goes to Saranankara Thera (1689-1778) who was later appointed by the king as "the king of the Sangha" (*sangharaja*). Saranankara Thera could receive only the initial admission, that is, admission as a novice, and there were no monks with higher admission in order to grant him the same. When there are no monks with higher admission it is considered that the Sasana of the Buddha no longer exists. This was the situation of Sri Lanka at that time. The situation was so bad that Saranankara could not find any teachers to receive guidance in his studies. He strived on his own and studied the Dhamma, Vinaya and the Pali language and other branches of knowledge befitting a monk. Being unable to initiate a monastic tradition, as he himself did not have proper admission to the Sangha, he organized a group called "virtuous ones" and trained them in the monastic life. Being undeterred by these adverse conditions Saranankara did everything he could to send envoys to the Southeast Asia region (Myanmar, Thailand, etc.) and bring monks with higher ordination so that the monastic tradition of the country could be revived. After one ill-fated effort in which most of those who went perished, Saranankara's envoys succeeded in reaching Siam (Thailand) on a second occasion. This mission was arranged under the auspices of King Kirti Sri Rajasimha (1747-82). The king of Siam arranged to send a group of more than twenty senior monks,[19] headed by the great elder called Upali, to Sri Lanka. The samaneras[20] headed by Saranankara received higher admission from this group of monks, and thus began the present "Siyam Nikaya" in 1753 which is the oldest and the largest among the three main chapters that currently exist in Sri Lanka. The two great monasteries of Mahanuvara, Malvatta and Asgiriya were restored to their traditional foremost position.[21]

The revival of the Sangha in this manner lead to the revival of monastic education and practice. Saranankara Thera became the leader of the Sangha in the country. The subsequent period from the latter part of the eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century proved to be a period of rapid development of the Sangha and monastic education. Saranankara Thera, who did not have access to any formal monastic education and consequently was more or less a self-taught man, strived hard to revive the almost lost monastic education system by gathering knowledge from whomever he could and writing texts and teaching students.[22] The students, who came from many parts of the country, received learning and discipline and returning to their native places started themselves doing the same. One of the early monastic education centres started outside Mahanuvara, as a result of this movement, was the Paramadhamma Cetiya Pirivena.[23] Two of the greatest erudite scholars of the nineteenth century Sri Lanka hailed from this pirivena, Hikkaduve Sri Sumangala (1826-1911) and Ratmalane Sri Dharmarama. The former started the Vidyodaya pirivena in 1873 and the latter's teacher, Ratmalane Sri Dharmaloka (1827-1887), who also had his monastic education at Paramadhamma Cetiya Pirivena, started the Vidyalanaka pirivena in 1875. These two centres continued to be the greatest monastic education centres of the country till the middle of the twentieth century, when the two centres, in recognition of their contribution to the traditional monastic and Sinhala Buddhist education were elevated to university status by the government. In their heydays in the first half of the twentieth century, students from neighbouring countries came there to study Buddhist philosophy and languages such as Pali and Sanskrit. Branches of these two great pirivena's were established all over the island, thus reviving the Buddhist monastic education system of the country.


Sangaraja

The interactions and exchanges between Sri Lanka and the Southeast Asian Theravada developed extensively during this period. While Kandy remained the capital where the king lived, the maritime regions of the south, which had been under Portuguese, the Dutch and then the English, grew in importance owing to the commerce that was fast-developing during this period. Consequently, there arose a group of wealthy indigenous businessmen who in turn supported religion and education. There seems to have developed some kind of rivalry between "up-country" (i.e. Kandy) and "down south". When some monastic applicants from down south were refused higher admission by the up-country monks some members of the former who felt discriminated against ventured to travel to Southeast Asian countries with the hope of receiving higher admission from the monks there. These monks were supported by the Sinhala Buddhist business elite who had by now amassed wealth by means of their business with the foreign traders. The first such group succeeded in reaching Myanmar and received higher admission from monks at the place named Amarapura. Upon their return to Sri Lanka these monks started working as a distinct group and thus was born the second chapter (*nikaya*) of present Sri Lanka monks, namely, the Amarapura chapter. This happened in 1802. Subsequently many groups followed suit, and upon return they established their own sub-chapters.[24]

The reason for the initial refusal of conferring higher admission from Kandy was the caste division which was deeply rooted in Sri Lankan society by this time. The Sangha in Kandy was of the opinion that the members belonging to one caste alone were eligible to receive higher admission from them and that all those belonged to other castes, which they considered to be lower, were not. The division between up-country and down south, too, may have played a role here. This situation resulted in some monks going to Myanmar and receiving higher admission. Once this process started, it continued partly due to similar caste distinctions prevalent down south and in other areas and also, even more importantly, due to certain nagging uncertainties about the "purity" of the higher admission, resulting mainly from the procedural matters connected with the act of conferring higher admission. Protracted and bitter debates over the procedural accuracy of the higher admission were characteristic among the down south monks during this period. The last of the three chapters, the Ramanna nikaya, arose in 1852 exclusively due to concerns of the purity of the higher admission as practiced by the Sangha belonging to both Siam and Amarapura sects. In that respect the third division came with an emphasis to go back to fundamentals.[25] The members of the Sangha belonging to these divisions were identifiable only by some external marks such as ways of donning the robe etc., for there was no doctrinal or discipline-related difference behind the division.

The second half of the nineteenth century was very important insofar as the Buddhist revival movement is concerned. After vanquishing some initial acts of resistance the British rule had been established. The country was gradually colonized and made to follow modern British ways of administration. A system of education was being introduced mainly to produce personnel for carrying out secondary level clerical work of the administration. Even this education was a privilege of those who had been converted to Christianity, or it was used as an incentive for people to get converted to the new religion, the Church of England. The traditional Buddhist education was still confined to the Buddhist monasteries, where, in addition to the members of the Sangha, only a handful of village boys received education. These were confined only to a few areas of study such as oriental languages, native medicine and astrology. An urgent need was felt to change this system. The conditions necessary for such change were gathering momentum in the country.

An important phenomenon that invigorated the Buddhist revival movement was the challenge from Christianity. The Christian clergy was very active in propagating their religion. At the beginning there was no resistance from the Buddhists against their activities. It is reported that the Buddhist monks even allowed these Christian missionaries to use the monastic assembly halls to hold their meetings. Gradually, however, as provocative acts against them increased, the Buddhists realized that such tolerant attitude was detrimental to their own religion. It is in this atmosphere that the Christian missionaries challenged Buddhists for public debates. Starting from 1865 there have been five such debates between the two groups. The last, which is known as the "Panadura debate", was held in 1873 at the place called Panadura close to Colombo, and the Buddhist and Christian sides were represented respectively by the Ven. Migettuvatte Gunananda thera (1823-1890), who was highly recognized for his oratorical excellence, and Rev. Fr. David Silva. It was widely perceived that this debate went largely in favour of the Buddhist side. In the words of KM De Silva, a well recognized historian, "the Rev.. Migettuwatte Gunananda proved himself a debater of a very high order, mettlesome, witty and eloquent if not especially erudite. The emotions generated by this debate and the impact of Migettuwatte Gunananda's personality deeply affected the next generation of Buddhist activists".[26]

Although Migettuvatte Gunananda Thera was the spokesman in public, he was assisted by a large group of erudite Buddhist monks, the foremost among whom was the Venerable Hikkaduve Sumangala (1826-1911), the erudite oriental scholar and Sangha leader, mentioned already. During this same period there were such great monks as Dodanduve Piyaratana Tissa (1826-1907), Ratmalane Sri Dharmarama, who succeeded his teacher Ratmalane Sri Dharmaloka as the principal of Vidyalankara pirivena, Veligama Sri Sumangala (1825-1905) and Vaskaduve Sri Subhuti (1835-1917). These members of the Sangha provided leadership to the society, disseminated knowledge on Buddhism, opened up branches of oriental *studies*, corresponded with scholars both in the East and West and became the pillars of Buddhism during this period.[27]

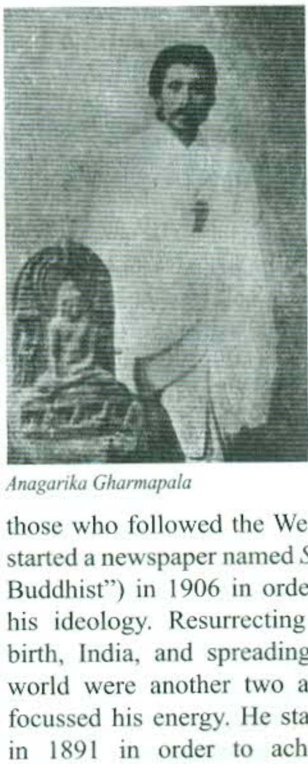
A report of the Panadura debate was read by Henry Steele Olcott (1832-1907) of New York who was the president of the Theosophical Society and who had developed a keen interest in

Migettuvatte Gunananda Thera

Buddhism. Olcott came to Sri Lanka in 1880 with Madame Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), a fellow theosophist, and embraced Buddhism and started working very closely with the Buddhist leaders on matters of religious and national importance. Olcott pioneered the establishment of a series of Buddhist schools for both girls and boys. Although already there were schools established for both girls and boys by Buddhist leaders such as Dodanduve Piyaratana Tissa Thera it is Olcott who introduced the modern school system to Sri Lankan Buddhists. The schools started in this manner soon developed to be the leading centres of learning of the country. Among his lasting contributions to the upliftment of Buddhism are the Buddhist Catechism which went into about forty reprints within the twenty years of its first publication; preparing with the help of local Buddhist leaders the six-coloured Buddhist flag; and starting the system of Sunday Dhamma school. In all these activities he was guided and assisted by the leading members of the Sangha including Hikkaduve Sri Sumangala. Olcott wrote in his diaries how carefully the latter scrutinized his Buddhist Catechism before he gave his approval which Olcott considered to be crucial for the public to accept his work as one representing accurately the teaching of the Buddha. Olcott's arrival in Sri Lanka injected much dynamism and vigour to the Buddhist revival movement.

Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933), Don David Hevavitarana by birth, was inspired by Olcott, and in many respects became his successor. Dharmapala came from a rich business family in Colombo, and his parents were pious Buddhists. Dharmapala received his education from missionary schools, as was the custom of the day. But his Buddhist atmosphere at home and close association with the leaders of the Sangha such as Hikkaduve Sri Sumangala nurtured his Sinhala Buddhist sentiments. He had witnessed, as a young boy, the Panadura debate, and was aware of the injustices of colonialism suffered by the native religion and the culture of the people. He joined with Olcott as his translator, and went around the island with him translating his speeches for the people. In these travels he saw how backward Sri Lanka society was socially, economically and spiritually. He decided to devote his life to the upliftment of Buddhism and Sinhala Buddhist people. He gave up his name given at his birth, which contained Portuguese and English elements, and took up the name Dharmapala, and also undertook the vow of celibacy for the rest of his life upon which he was known as Anagarika Dharmapala. Meanwhile a watershed event in Dharmapala's life came about when he was chosen to represent Theravada Buddhism at the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1892. Dharmapala went to this conference, impressed the participants both by his oratory and personality, made some important friends, developed long-lasting inter-national relations and came back much stronger than he went.

Hikkaduve Sri Sumangala Thera and Henry Steele Olcott



Anagarika Gharmapala

Dharmapala's was a Sinhala Buddhist ideology. Protecting and developing Buddhism and awakening and winning the rights of Sinhala Buddhists were key aspects of Dharmapala's activism. In order to achieve these goals Dharmapala went around the country addressing people, chastising them for their lack of incentive, lethargy, and moral degradation. He openly criticised those who followed the Western ways of behaviour. He started a newspaper named *Sinhala Bauddhaya* ("Sinhala Buddhist") in 1906 in order to serve as a platform for his ideology. Resurrecting Buddhism in its place of birth, India, and spreading Buddhism in the Western world were another two areas on which Dharmapala focussed his energy. He started the Mahabodhi Society in 1891 in order to achieve the latter two goals. Although Dharmapala became disillusioned with the local Buddhist leaders and spent the last part of his life in India, Dharmapala's influence on the revival of Sri Lanka Buddhism was enormous. A generation of people exemplified by Gunapala Malalasekera (1899-1973), scholar, Buddhist activist and diplomat, who adopted Sinhala Buddhist names and wore Sinhala national dress took upon themselves the task of carrying forward Dharmapala's project of safeguarding Buddhism and revitalizing the Sinhala Buddhist culture.

Independence and After

Sri Lanka (Ceylon[28]) received independence from Britain in 1948. Although the administration was passed to

Sinhala (Tamil, Muslim and Burgher) leaders there was not much change in the ways of thinking of these new leaders who were basically Western in their upbringing irrespective of their religion. Although the majority of the new leaders were Buddhist, Christianity still played a dominant role in the elite life. This state started to change only with the 1956 general election in which SWRD Bandaranaike came to power with a promise to reinstate Buddhism and the Sinhala culture to their due place. Bandaranaike was supported by the so-called "fivefold great force", namely, the Sangha, teachers, farmers, native physicians, and labourers.

There was a consensus among the leading members of the Sangha and the laity that a comprehensive study must be done on the current situation of Buddhism in the country in order to identify the problems and propose remedial measures. The Buddhists in vain expected the Government to appoint a commission. Realizing that it was not to happen, in 1953 Malalasekera in his capacity as the head of the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress proposed that a board of inquiry should be appointed to this effect. A group of leading Buddhist monks and lay people were appointed as members of this board. They travelled all over the country, met thousands of both monks and lay people and studied their views and proposals and prepared a comprehensive report which was completed in 1956.

While politically 1956 marked a beginning of a new era for Buddhism and the Sinhala culture, more significantly it coincided with the 2,500th anniversary of the Maha Parinirvana ("great passing away") of the Buddha. Buddhists all over the world celebrated this event which was called "The Buddha Jayanti". The Buddhists of Sri Lanka prepared themselves for this event for several years with many short-term and long-term programmes and projects. Many Buddhist organizations and societies were started all over the country, and acts of piety and generosity were seen everywhere. Among the long-term projects sponsored by the government were the translation of the Tripitaka, the Pali Buddhist canon, into Sinhala, the compilation of the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, and the Sinhala Encyclopaedia, the first two of which have been completed.

The board of inquiry submitted its report to the public during 1956, and it was accepted by Mr Bandaranaike, who ran for the office of prime minister later that year with the promise that he would implement its proposals if he were to come to power. As expected Bandaranaike did come to power, and being true to his promises to the Sinhala Buddhist public he made Sinhala the state language, recognized Buddhism as the main religion of the country, allocated a ministry for cultural affairs, made Sinhala language the medium of instruction of higher studies, promoted two great pirivenas (mentioned already) to the status of national universities in order to recognize the service rendered by these centres of learning to the nation and also to open the doors of the university education to the Sinhala-medium students. Bandaranaike also took measures to appoint a commission to study the problems affecting the Buddha Sasana and make recommendations to solve such problems. The high-powered commission consisting of leading monks and laymen travelled all over the island, met a large number of monks, laymen and representatives of various organizations and social groups and came up with a report with many valuable observations and proposals. Before the proposals of the commission were implemented Bandaranaike was assassinated by a certain group, the economic ambitions of which were frustrated owing to some of his decisions. It was unfortunate that the assassin himself was a Buddhist monk, an accomplice of another high-ranking Buddhist monk. Innovations and changes introduced by Bandaranaike had far-reaching effects on Sri Lanka society though some measures, such as making Sinhala the official language the country, divides opinion. Bandaranaike's rule marked a beginning of a new perspective in governance, education and public life with a clear emphasis on tradition and culture.

A phenomenon which, among others, was instrumental in bringing Bandaranaike to power and which was becoming visible in the fourth and fifth decades of the twentieth century was the increasing involvement of the Buddhist monks in public debates including politics. Coming out from their monastic boundaries, some monks was determined to assert their role as leaders and opinion-makers of society. As we observed in our discussion of the beginnings of the modern Buddhist revival, the monks were at its forefront as leaders, guides and resource persons. This situation, which existed even after Olcott arrived and paved the way for the Buddhist modernism, started to change gradually, particularly with the lay Buddhist activists with English knowledge and modern education. The monks with their pirivena education, which emphasized traditional knowledge, were no match to the lay Buddhists whose lifestyle and thinking was more Western and less traditional. Most of these lay Buddhists were of the view that the monks should only be concerned with their own salvation. In this atmosphere, gradually the educated younger generation of monks felt the need to reassert their historical role as the leaders of the Sinhala Buddhist society. The best example of this way of thinking is seen in Walpola Rahula's *Bhiksuvage Urumaya* (originally published in 1946[29]). Rahula was a spokesperson of this movement, and in the introduction he says that the book is an expanded version of the speech he made in a meeting in Kandy in March 1946. In this small but powerful presentation, Rahula argues, based on the evidence from the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, that social and political activism has been part and parcel of Sri Lankan Buddhist monks from the early beginnings of Buddhism in the country. As Rahula reports there were several mass meetings in Colombo and in other cities such as Kandy to drive this point home and to reassert the "right" of the monks to engage in political activities. In addition to the public meetings, there were two main declarations by the monks asserting this right, one is the declaration of Vidyalankara Pirivena issued on February 13, 1946, and the other was the declaration of Kelaniya Rajamaha Viharaya issued the same year. The latter was issued as a declaration of the entire Maha Sangha of the island. Behind these moves there were organizations of the monks representing various segments of the Sangha islandwide. It is mainly these monks who rallied round Bandaranaike in 1956 to bring him to power.

The political involvement of the monks has been more or less a standard feature in Sri Lanka politics. Both monks and lay people are divided on the issue of the appropriateness of this involvement. But it remains a fact that many monks hold political allegiances to both liberal democratic and socialist parties, and a considerable number of them would make sure their allegiances are seen publicly. A more recent development in this trend is the formation of the political party called Jatika Hela Urumaya (JHU) ("National Sinhala Heritage") in which monks are not mere supporters but direct stakeholders. The party was inspired by Gangodawila Soma Thera (1948-2003), a charismatic monastic leader who was outspoken on re-establishing "a righteous rule" (*dharma-rajyaya*) in the country and re-asserting the pure Buddhist practices as against superstitious beliefs and rites and rituals. His untimely death in 2003 was the factor that ushered this new shift in monastic politics. Up to this point, the monastic political involvement, at most, was to be a member of a political party. But beyond being content with being supporters, they did not hold any offices in the party; nor did they hold any public offices in their capacity as members of a political party. Monks never contested at parliament elections. With the JHU this situation changed radically. The leader of the JHU himself was a monk, and in the 2006 general election, a large group of monks contested for parliamentary seats, and nine candidates were elected from this party to parliament. Consequently nine monks sat in the parliament of Sri Lanka, which is unprecedented in any Theravada Buddhist country.[30] The main ideology of the JHU is Sinhala Buddhist nationalism although its overall aim is to create a rule of righteousness in the country. Monastic involvement in politics has never been a universally accepted or approved phenomenon in the Sri Lanka Theravada tradition: there have always been its supporters as well as detractors.[31] In the absence of any hard and fast "theological" stance in the Theravada tradition, one has to wait and see how the whole phenomenon will unfold.

Future Challenges

Buddhism has existed in the country for more than twenty-three centuries. The preceding discussion should show that its journey through this long period of time has not been all even. This remains even more so today with new situations and challenges, some of which are internal and some others external. The challenges arising from globalization and the widespread materialist outlook of life are common to any religious tradition anywhere in the world today. It is the same for Buddhism. While many monks seem to endeavour to approximate the ideal monkhood, there are some others who are motivated by worldly gains such as money and fame. This problem has been there in the Sasana almost from its very beginning. As we have already observed, in many instances the rulers and the great elders have adopted rectifying measures in the form of the purification of the Sangha, and enacting katikavatas (disciplinary agreements) etc. Although no katikavatas have been enacted recently, the two commissions referred to above (1953 by All Ceylon Buddhist Congress and 1957 by the Bandaranaike government) may be considered as efforts in this direction by virtue of the proposals they made to improve the state of the Sangha in particular and the state of Buddhism in general.

More recently a similar commission was appointed by President Chandrika Bandaranaike Cumaranatunga in July 2001. This commission was named the "Presidential Commission of Buddha Sasana" and comprised a group of leading monks and lay persons as its members. It was required to inquire into the following ten issues and make relevant recommendations: 1. Review the current situation of the Buddha Sasana in the country; 2. Problems and challenges faced by the Buddha Sasana and the Buddhists; 3. Procedures to be followed in newly establishing Buddhist religious places; 4. Problems and issues involved in Buddhist monastic properties; 5. Proposals to make maximum use of the Buddhist monastic properties; 6. Wilful destruction of Buddhist monasteries and monuments; 7. Difficulties faced by monks in their services to the Sasana and the measures to enhance their development; 8. The education of the monks and he training of the missionaries of the Dhamma (*dharma-duta*); 9. Alleged decline of the Buddhist society, both monastic and lay; and 10. Efforts by new religious groups to convert Buddhists by questionable means. The issues mentioned in this list provide a good index to the problems and challenges of Sri Lankan Buddhism today. The commissioners submitted their report in June 2002, and proposed many corrective measures for the problems they were asked to study and examine. Three major commissions within a span of five decades (1953 to 2001) suggest that Buddhists in Sri Lanka are well aware of the problems they face as a community. But it remains a problem whether the major remedial measures proposed in these valuable documents would be adopted. For example, an important measure to regulate the behaviour of the monks and sort out all problems related to monastic property and organization, namely, the establishment of an ecclesiastical judiciary (*sangha-adhikarana*) has been proposed by these commissions, but remains neglected.

The Buddhist monastic education has been a major concern of all the commissions. The perception is that the traditional monastic (*pirivena*) education system is not capable of catering to the needs of contemporary society. The university undergraduate education was basically meant for the lay society. Young monks who received that education were misfits within their monastic environs, for they lacked knowledge in Buddhist philosophy. Even those who pursued Buddhist studies often were not equipped with modern language skills. Two new universities were started by the state in order to remedy this situation. Buddha Sravaka Dharma Pethaya (later Buddha Sravaka Bhiksu University) was started in 1968 and the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka in 1982. Training missionaries of the Dhamma (dhamma-duta) with necessary language skills was among the main objectives of the two universities, and it is one area where these new universities have failed in a decisive manner. None of the monks produced by these universities matched those well-known missionaries of the Dhamma such as Narada Thera (1898-1983), Piyadassi Thera (1914-1998) and Bope Vinita Thera who were the products of Vajiraramaya of Bambalapitiya, Colombo, Rev. K Sri Dhammananda (1918-2006) who was based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and to Hammalava Saddhatissa Thera (1914-1990) and Medagama Vajiranana Thera (1928-2006) who started their dhammaduta work in India and later went to the West. Unlike these monks who took the message of the Buddha all over the world the present-day monks go abroad to basically serve the Sri Lanka Buddhist communities living mostly in the West and in other parts of the world. Since such monks serve their own people, their lack of knowledge in an international language does not pose a big obstacle. Nevertheless, it is clear that their already invaluable service could have been even more meaningful had they possessed good Dhamma knowledge and language skills.

Theravada monastic tradition in Sri Lanka retains the original "decentralized" administration characteristic of the early Buddhist tradition. During the time of the Buddha, even though he was their overall leader, the monks living in different localities took care of their own activities not amounting to making basic Vinaya related decisions. After the parinirvana of the Buddha we can see that Maha Kassapa Thera took over as the leader of the Sangha (*sangha-thera*), but not as the Teacher or as a substitute for the Teacher. Thus, the independent character of the Sangha continued. The history of the Sangha, in particular the occurrence of the councils (*sangayana*) testifies to the fact that the Sangha made decisions as a whole when it came to matters affecting the entire Sangha. In the Sri Lanka Theravada tradition the monks are basically governed by the heads of the "chapter" (*nikaya*) to which they belong. As there are three major chapters and many sub-chapters within them the administration of the Sangha is highly decentralized. Although the three chapters have four supreme heads, these chapters with the exception of the Ramanna–nikaya[32] have their many sub-sects which make their own decisions. This is different from the South-east Asia Theravada tradition in which the concept of one supreme head of the Sangha is still functional. While the Sri Lanka model is closer to the decentralized system that existed originally, it seems to have its drawbacks. The more recent history of the Sri Lanka Theravada shows that there have been certain fundamental innovations within the Sangha, without the blessings of the supreme heads.

A case in point is the re-start of the bhikkhuni-sasana – order of nuns - with the granting of higher admission (upasampada). Among the Theravada countries the bhikkhuni order has existed only in Sri Lanka. Up to the end of the Anuradhapura period there are records of the existence of the bhikkhuni order, and although the exact time is not known, by the end of the Polonnaruwa period, owing to the attacks of the invaders such as Magha, the Bhikkhuni order seems to have completely disappeared. The nuns' order that exists today in the Theravada countries is a movement started at the beginning of the twentieth century. In Sri Lanka they are called *dasa sil mata* ("mother with ten virtues") for they observe the ten precepts usually observed by people on lunar (*poya*) days and regularly by the novice monks and nuns (*samanera* and *samaneri*). More recently there has been much discussion on the possibility of re-establishing the bhikkhuni order, and the standard orthodox view held unanimously by all three supreme heads is that it is impossible because the succession of bhikkhunis is broken, and that there should be a Buddha to initiate it again. We must note in this context that the unbroken succession is very important in order for the monastic tradition to continue. This is amply demonstrated in the frequent exchanges of higher admission between the Theravada countries. When the succession of monks with higher admission is broken in one country, fortunately for the Theravada orthodoxy, it has existed in some other country. This was not the case with the bhikkhuni order for it was existent only in Sri Lanka. Amidst many discussions and debates, a group of Sri Lanka dasa sil matas received higher admission from a group of Korean nuns at Buddhagaya in 1980. These bhikkhunis, following the Theravada tradition, subsequently received higher ordination from a group of Sri Lanka monks. (Once the bhikkhunis have received higher admission it was not a problem for the monks to reaffirm it.) By receiving higher admission from both nuns and monks in this manner it is considered that the tradition of the bhikhunis with higher admission has properly begun.[33] Subsequently there have been several similar instances and presently the joint ceremony of higher admission has become an annual affair. The interesting and important issue in this whole process is that the legitimacy of this act of conferment of higher admission on dasa sil matas by some groups of the Sri Lanka Sangha has not been accepted by anyone of the three supreme heads of the three chapters. Following their non-acceptance the Sri Lanka state, too, does not recognise the legitimacy of this new group of bhikkhunis with higher admission. This non-recognition, however, has not resulted in any official banning or any other similar punitive measures on the part of the supreme heads as one would have expected. For all the practical purpose it is correct to say that the bhikkhuni Sasana functions in Sri Lanka although its official status remains still undetermined. If there were one central authority in the Sangha the situation would have been different.

Discussing challenges coming from without, Buddhists in Sri Lanka have been seriously concerned about what has been termed as "unethical conversions".[34] This has been particularly so for the last several decades. One of the tasks assigned to the 2001 Presidential Commission on the Buddha Sasana was to study this problem and propose remedial measures. The commission report devotes the ninth chapter to this issue. The commission makes a clear distinction between traditional Christianity, which has been in Sri Lanka for about five centuries, and the new evangelical movements which are out to convert. The commission discusses ways of "bribing" people to accept Christianity and finds that such measures are objectionable and unacceptable. In particular, the commission finds objectionable how the loopholes of law have been used in order to enter the country and register the organizations by camouflaging their real religious identity. The commission makes a series of proposals to remedy this situation. The proposals are not only to strengthen the law but also for monks, Buddhist organizations and the general public to positively address the social and economic issues affecting the Buddhist communities in the country.

The gravity of the problem has been such that, as recently as 2008, the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress (ACBC) appointed a special commission of its own to study this problem exclusively. The commission, which was appointed by the president of ACBC, was to study the extent of conversion and its modes of operation and causes and conditions that make people to leave their own religion and propose remedial measures. The commission heard evidence at twenty-three locations in different parts of the country from 348 people, accepted written submissions and produced its report in 2009. It contained 121 recommendations and conclusions out of which thirty-four specific recommendations were directly relevant to the problem of conversion, and the rest to the areas with a bearing on the problem. Although this is not the appropriate context to make a comprehensive study of this report and its recommendations, the very fact that such a commission was appointed by a group of leading Buddhists and was welcomed by the Buddhist public, which testifies to the seriousness of the situation in the eyes of the Buddhists of this country.

One of the gravest problems, not only for the entire Sri Lanka nation but also in particular to Buddhism, was the acts of terrorism perpetuated by a group of Tamil nationals through the organization called the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE). The bloody conflict which lasted nearly three decades was finally ended in 2009.[35] The destruction caused to the country, to its people belonging to all ethnicities, including Tamils, is enormous. Buddhism was particularly targeted: the Buddhist sacred places such as Sri Maha Bodhi (attacked on May 14, 1985, killing 200 pilgrims) and the Palace of the Tooth Relic (attacked on January 25, 1998). Many others were attacked and some were totally destroyed. The Buddhist monks were particularly targeted, and the killing of thirty-three very young novice monks cold-bloodedly at Aranthalava in the Eastern Province on June 2, 1987, was particularly appalling. Apart from this "physical" destruction, Buddhism also had to suffer ideologically for there was a widespread belief that the Buddhist monks were actively supporting an armed intervention as the solution to the LTTE's terrorism. It is this position of the monks that was described as a betrayal of Buddhism by Tambiah in his much discussed work *Buddhism Betrayed?*[36] It is not altogether incorrect to say that the majority of the Buddhist monks supported an armed intervention. But it is equally true that one cannot fully appreciate the position of the Sri Lankan Buddhist monks in a rather simplistic manner in which Tambiah proposes, namely, purely with reference to the fundamental teachings of the Buddha. The position of the Buddhist monks is one informed by the long historical experience of more than two millennia: throughout the history of the island until the arrival of the Europeans at the end of the fifteenth century, the invader and the usurper nearly always came from the south of India,[37] "the Tamil country", and always it was the Sinhala community that they had to rely on for the protection of the religion. Although such historical fears may not be wholly realistic today, they are nevertheless fears, and the communities involved will have to work patiently for a long time in order to end such fears. The position of Sri Lanka Buddhism was to concede to the use of power when all peaceful means fail. These remarks are not to provide an excuse for resorting to violence, but to acknowledge the seriousness of the challenge of balancing between non-violence and pragmatism.

Conclusion

Historically and culturally Buddhism has been an essential aspect of Sri Lanka. In the foregoing discussion we observed how Arahant Mahinda Thera insisted on establishing Buddhism in the country and its taking roots. Walpola Rahula has pointed out the significance of this idea of "establishing" Buddhism in a particular locality.[38] Throughout the history of Sri Lanka the close relation between Buddhism and the country has been asserted in no uncertain terms. In 1815, when the country was handed over to the British by signing an agreement, it was clearly mentioned in the fifth paragraph that the new rulers should not violate but undertake to protect and maintain the Buddha Sasana, the Sangha and the monasteries and the religion of gods. This same protection and privilege was a feature in the 1972 constitution of the Sri Lanka Socialist Republic (chapter II) as well as in present constitution, i.e. the 1978 constitution of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (chapter II). While allowing this special status to Buddhism, the same chapter of the constitution states that this "foremost position" has to be exercised in a manner that it does not violate the rights of the other religions practiced in the country. While the presence of many religions and many ethnicities make Sri Lanka a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society,[39] its history and culture makes it a Sinhala Buddhist country and a Sinhala Buddhist society. This, however, should not be understood as supporting a theocracy, a religious state in which laws of religion are the laws of the country. In the lively debate as to whether or not Sri Lanka is a Buddhist country, even the most ardent supporter of Sri Lanka as a Buddhist country will not interpret his/her stance as supporting a religious state. It is the nature of the teaching of the Buddha that it does not support either religious exclusivism or religious fundamentalism, and history has shown with sufficient evidence that the Buddhists in this country have not done harm to this fundamental sense of tolerance found in their religion.

Notes

1 With reference to its doctrinal position the Theravada tradition has also been named "vibhajja-vada" or the doctrine of analysis. Read Karunadasa (1983) p.1 ff. for a discussion.

2 The periods in the history of Sri Lanka are counted following the capital cities where the king usually had his seat of administration. What follows are the periods/capitals (some of which coincide with others) recognized in Sri Lanka history: Anuradhapura (fourth century BCE-1029), Polonnaruwa (1054-1236), Dambadeniya (1215-1272), Yapahuwa (1272-1300), Kurunegala (1300-1341), Gampola (1341-1451), Kotte (1371-1597), Sitawaka (1521-1594), Mahanuwara (1591-1815). Ever since the British takeover Colombo has remained the capital city.

3 The information on the early history of Sri Lanka is found mainly (but not exclusively, for other sources such as inscriptions, archaeological monuments etc. are not mentioned here) in the literary sources written in the Pali language. There is evidence to believe that such information was originally kept in the Sinhala language and was later edited and translated into Pali as they are available presently. Subsequently, these works have been re-translated into Sinhala from the Pali sources. The Pali commentaries for the three baskets, Sutta, Vinaya and Abhidhamma, were finalised in Sri Lanka by Buddhaghosa and they contain valuable information on the history of Buddhism in the island. The ancient and medieval Sinhala literature dealing basically with Buddhist religious themes may also be included in the same category.

Apart from these "indirect" sources (providing historical information was not their main purpose), there is what may be called "lineage stories" [chronicles] (vamsa-katha) the direct purpose of which was to record the history. These vamsa-kathas are of two types: those that deal with the history of Buddhism and the country directly and those that deal with the history of particular sacred objects such as the Bodhi tree, the tooth relic, the great stupa etc.

Falling in the first category are the *Dipavamsa* ("lineage of the island") and the *Mahavamsa* ("the great lineage").The period covered by both books is the same, namely from the beginning to the conclusion of the reign of King Sirimeghavanna (301-328).The author of the *Dipavamsa* is not known. It is believed that the *Mahavamsa,* which was written in the fifth century, was meant to replace the former which is less organized and repetitive at times. The tradition of the *Mahavamsa* was continued by subsequent authors: the second part covers the history up to Great Parakramabahu I of the Polonnaruwa period, the third up to Parakramabahu IV in the Kurunegala period, the fourth up to Kirti Sri Rajasimha of the Kandy period, and the fifth covering up to the British period. Updating the Mahavamsa has been an on-going process up to the present.

In addition, there are many chronicles dealing with the history of sacred Buddhist objects such as the Bodhi tree, the tooth relic, the great stupa etc., which provide valuable historical information not only of those particular objects but also on the history of the island and Buddhism in general. Apart from these works there are works such as Nikaya-sangrahaya and Rajavaliya, belonging to the medieval period and written in Sinhala, which serve as valuable sources for the study of the history of Buddhism in the country.

4 The island was also known as tambapanni-dipa ("the island of copper palm") in ancient literature. This usage alludes to the existence of copper-coloured beaches in some parts of the island.

5 *Mahavamsa* Ch.X. For modern academic discussions on the religions in the pre-Buddhist Sri Lanka, read: Paranavitana (*Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* Vol. xxxi), Adikaram (1946/1994) and Rahula (1956).

6 I use "initial and higher admission" to refer to what is popularly and inappropriately termed as "ordination" and "higher ordination" respectively.

7 Arahant Mahinda's stress on the Vinaya in this context signifies a strict adherence to the Theravada emphasis on the Vinaya, established at the first council (sangayana), as the life of the Sasana (organization).

8 The Bodhi tree still remains where it was planted originally, and is considered to be the oldest tree in the world with a recorded history. It is venerated by the entire Buddhist world as the most sacred tree and symbol of the enlightenment of the Buddha.

9 See note no. iii. Due to this special mention of the bhikkhunis some scholars believe that the *Dipavamsa* is a work of a bhikkhuni. See Adikaram (1946/2009) p.57 for details.

10 Gunawardana, RALH, "Subtle Silk Ferrous Firmness: Buddhist nuns in ancient and early medieval Sri Lanka and their role in the propagation of Buddhism" in *Sri Lanka Journal of Humanities*, Vol.14, Nos.1-2 1988. pp.3-5.

11 Rahula (1956/1993) p.18.

12 Adikaram (1946/1994) p.70.

13 See Adikaram (mentioned above) p.77ff. for a detailed discussion.

14 There is a scholarly debate on the exact role of Buddhaghosa. While Buddhaghosa seems to present himself as nothing more than a translator, many tend to believe that his role was far beyond that. See Kalupahana (1992: ch.xxi) for a discussion.

15 Walpola Rahula (1956) p.110.

16 A moonstone is a half-moon shaped unique creation of Sinhala architecture. It was meant to serve as the stepping stone at the entrance of a building, in particular at sacred buildings. In this complicated artwork a line of four animals, lion, horse, bull and elephant, are carved as walking one after the other. In Polonnaruwa moonstones the bull is conspicuous in its absence.

17 The reader may refer to: Senaka Weeraratne (June 12, 2005) "Repression of Buddhism in Sri Lanka by the Portuguese (1505-1658)", Portuguese Repression – Vgweb Home Page (accessed on August 17, 2011.)

18 See Obeyesekere in Roberts (1977)

19 In order to confer higher admission (upasampada) on a samanera the minimum quorum is twenty monks who have reached "elder" (thera) status, i.e. ten years after their own higher admission.

20 "samanera" is one who has received only initial admission (pabbajja) and not higher admission (upasampada).

21 Malvatta and Asgiriya function as the two main groups of the Siam nikaya. In addition, there are six other sub-sects, namely, Mahavihara Vanavasika nikaya (forest monks), Kotte Sri Kalyani Samagri Sanghasabha, Syamopali Nikaya: Uva chapter, Syamopali Nikaya: Rohana chapter, Syamopali Nikaya: Kalyani chapter and Rangiri Dambulla chapter, the last five originating on the basis of regional divisions of the country.

According to the Buddha Sasana Ministry statistics currently 20,303 monks belonging to these chapters occupy 5,814 monasteries.

22 Read Ann Blackburn (2001) for a more recent comprehensive study on Saranankara Thera and the beginning of modern Buddhist revival.

23 "Pirivena", deriving from Pali "parivena", means "monastic education centre" in current Sinhala parlance.

24 Currently there are altogether 21 divisions of the Amarapura nikaya: Amarapura Sirisaddhammavansa maha nikaya, Amarapura Mulavamsika nikaya, Udarata Amarapura nikaya, Amarapura Sabaragamu Saddhamma nikaya, saddhammayuttika (Matara) nikaya, Dadalu Paramparayatta Amarapura nikaya, Amarapura Marammavansabhidhaja nikaya, Amarapura Vajiravansa nikaya, Kalyanivamsika Sri Dharmarama Saddhammayuttika nikaya, Sri Lanka Svejin maha nikaya, Sabaragamu saddhammavansa nikaya, Amarapura Ariyavansa saddhammayuttika nikaya, Culaganthi nikaya, Udarata Amarapura Samagri Sanghasabhava, Uva Amarapura nikaya, Amarapura Sri Dharmarakshitavansa nikaya, Udukinda Amarapura nikaya, Sambuddha Sasanodaya Sanghasabhava, Amarapura maha nikaya, Amarapura nikaya, and Sri Kalyanivansa nikaya.

According to the Buddha Sasana Ministry statistics currently 10,254 monks belonging to these chapters occupy 2,575 monasteries.

25 According to the Buddha Sasana Ministry statistics currently there are 7,458 monks belonging to this nikaya occupying 1,687 monasteries.

26 KM de Silva (1981) pp.340-41.

27 For a comprehensive discussion on the role of the Sangha during this period read: *From the Living Fountains of Buddhism*, Ananda WP Guruge, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Colombo, 1984.

28 The country was called Ceylon during the British rule and it was changed to Sri Lanka by the 1972 constitution.

29 The English translation, *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu*, was published by Grove Press, New York in 1974.

30 The first Buddhist monk to be elected to the Sri Lanka parliament was Rev. Baddegama Samitha who represented the Sri Lanka Sama Samaja (socialist) Party and got elected at the 2001 election from the district of Galle in the Southern Province.

31 In his *The Work of Kings: The New Buddhism in Sri Lanka* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1999) HL Seneviratne takes the Vidyalankara monks who took into politics and who justified and supported the political involvement of the monks to task. He does not cover the JHU phenomenon. He praises the Vidyodaya monks who took up social work as their service to the society.

32 Its forest wing, Kalyani Yogashrama Sansthava, functions separately but not as a separate chapter.

33 See Bartholomeusz (1994) and Seneviratne (1999) for a comprehensive discussion on this issue.

34 Aggressive efforts at conversion by some Christian groups is not confined

to Sri Lanka or to Buddhism alone. These groups have been active in many parts of the world, in particular where economic conditions are wanting. While the use of violence was the 'classical' method of conversion, the more recent efforts are made through distributing material incentives.

35 On May 19, 2009, the President of Sri Lanka announced to the world the defeat of LTTE and the consequent termination of the war.

36 Tambiah (1992)

37 There are only two exceptions, one is the invasion from the East Asia region, during the reign of Parakramabahu II (1236-70), Chandrabhanu of Tambralinga, a state in the Malay peninsula, and before this Magha who destroyed Polonnaruwa came from Orissa region.

38 See Rahula (1956/1003) pp.54-5.

39 The ethnic breakdown of the population is as follows (percentage): Sinhala 73.9; Tamil 12.6; Moor 7.4; Indian Tamil 5.2; other 0.5. The religious breakdown of the population is as follows: Buddhist 69; Hindu 15; Christian 8; Islam 8.

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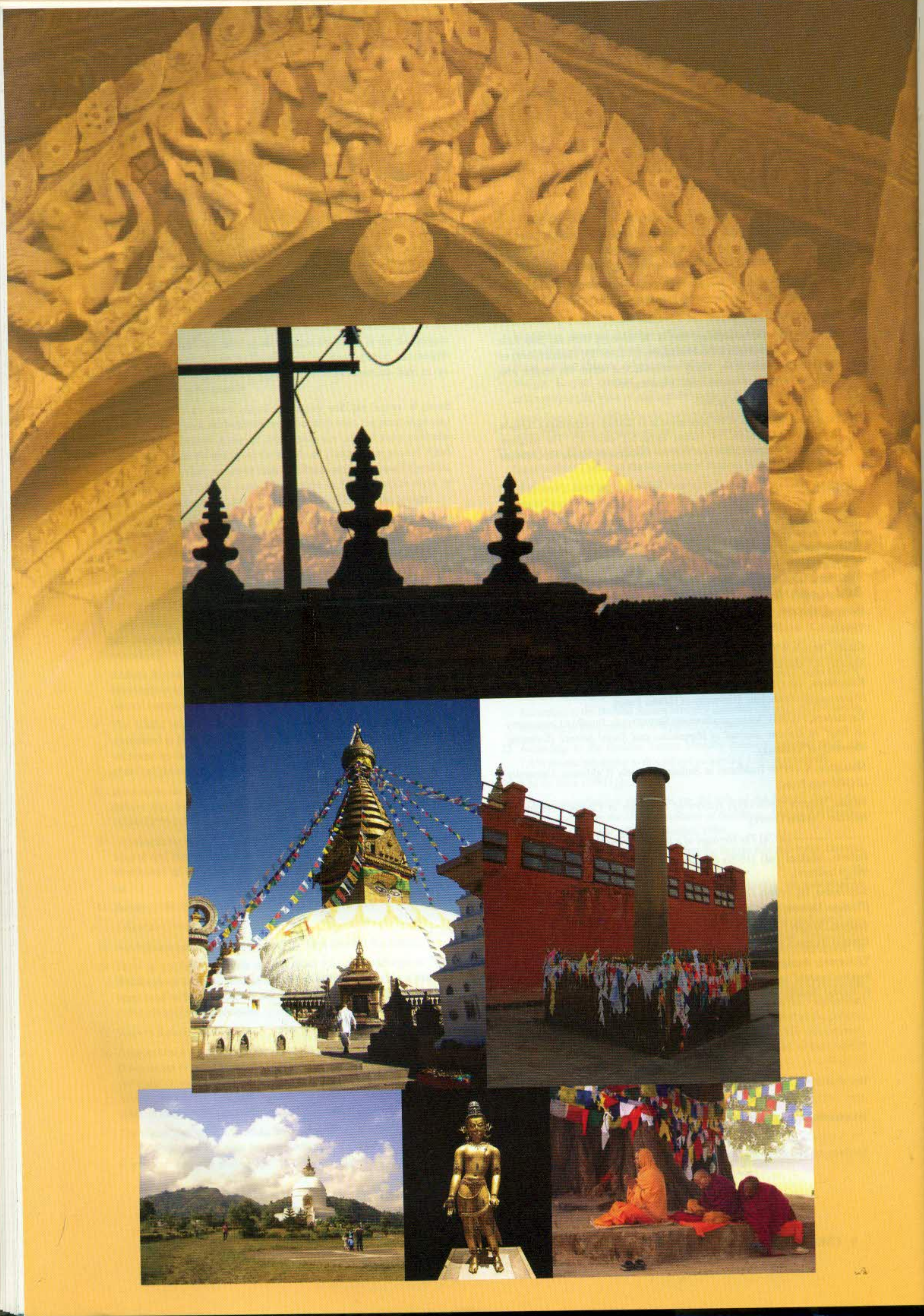

ESSAY 5

Buddhism in Nepal

(With Reference to the Twentieth Century)

Min Bahadur Shakya

Introduction

Newar Buddhism is classified in the tradition of Indian Vajrayana or Tantric Buddhism, deriving its lineage from the Siddha tradition of Nalanda and Vikramashila monastic universities. However, it has developed its peculiar characteristics, which are one of a kind in Buddhist history. It should be remembered that Newar Buddhism possesses a number of indigenous elements that are not found in Indian Mahayana Buddhism. Now that Mahayana Buddhism has disappeared from India, Newar Buddhism, found in the Kathmandu Valley, represents one of the few traditions in the world that has retained features inherited directly from India. At one time all forms of Buddhism were believed to have been found in the Buddhism of Nepal. At present, there are no longer any celibate monks among the Newar Buddhist Sangha. The members of the community live in a vihara and have retained its designation (Sangha).

In the present essay, I will try to present the status of Buddhism in Nepal, the revival of the Theravada Buddhist movement, as well as the influence of Tibetan Buddhism on it, based on my own observations within the twentieth-century.

Observation on the State of Buddhism in Nepal

Triple refuge in Newar Buddhism

The *Svayambhu Purana*, (SvP), offers a new model of Buddhist practice for lay people who live the lifestyle of an Adikarmik Bodhisattva, as advocated by Acarya Anupamavajra in the eleventh century. It is a devotional work rather than a historical treatise, which has countless important details about the formation of Newar Buddhism. In this sense it is a wholly authentic source.

In their version of the three refuges, Newar Buddhists adopted the Adi–Buddha principle (or Buddha Nature/Five Buddhas) as the representative of the Buddha jewel.

The Newar Buddhists, like Buddhists everywhere, take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. In the Mahayana and Vajrayana context, the Buddha is of course, Shakyamuni Buddha. But in Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, the Five Tathagatas (Pañca Buddhas),[1] best-known in ritual, are:

Vairocana
Aksobhya
Ratnasambhava
Amitabha
Amoghasiddhi

The Dharma is realization of Prajñopaya, namely unity of wisdom and skilful means, contained in nine texts:

Astasahasrika Prajnaparamita[2]
Gandavyuha
Dasabhumikasutra
Saddharmapundarika
Suvanaprabhåsa
Lankavatara
Samadhiraja
Lalitavistara
Tathagataguhyaka Sutra

These are recognized as the canonical official texts. They are recited at various times, and the books are worshipped. In fact, worship is more favored than scholarly study.

The Sangha is, of course, the Bodhisattva Sangha. Much of the devotional life of the people revolve around the worship of eight Bodhisattvas, especially Avalokiteshvara and Manjusri. Avalokiteshvara is recognized as the head of eight Bodhisattvas. He is the representative of the Sangha of Bodhisattvas. Just as in Theravada Buddhist tradition, the Bodhisattva Sangha is excluded, similarly in Newar Buddhist tradition Shravaka Sangha is excluded. Since the emphasis is laid on the Mahayana/Vajrayana tradition of Buddhist Sangha it would be unwise to expect the Buddhist Sangha of Newar Buddhists to be in a Theravada context.

Newar Buddhism as a lay Bodhisattva practice

It seems there had been a provision for a lay Buddhist monkhood, which became very popular in the Kathmandu Valley. The validity of this tradition was also corroborated by the text *Siksamuccaya* of Acarya Shanti Deva:

> *Punaraparam kulaputra bhavishyanti anagata adhavani grihahastha pravrajita Adikarmika bodhisattva.* ("Again, oh, Sons of the family, there will be the householder beginner (Skt: *Adikarmika*) and ordained bodhisattvas in the future".)

Concerning Adikarmika Bodhisattva, Acarya Anupamavajra stands prominent: his work had a great influence on Nepalese Buddhist tradition. It is surprising to note that *Adikarmapradipa,*[3] which was composed in 1098 CE by Anupamavajra, had a profound impact on the daily practice of Newar Buddhist society and continues to do so today. In this context it is befitting to cite the verses of *Adikarmapradipa.* Briefly, it deals with the following practices of Newar Buddhists:

1 Take refuge in the Triple Gems
2 Recite the *Namasangiti*
3 Recite the *Bhadracarya Pranidhana*
4 Offer the *Preta bali*
5 Circumambulate the Caitya, Buddha statues, etc.
6 Perform the *Gurumandala* rite
7 Meditate on the tutelary deity
8 Recite the *Prajnaparamita* and other Mahayana Sutras
9 Recite the *danagatha* (stories of *Dana*)
10 Perform Bodhisattva practices
11 Study the Buddhist scriptures
12 Offer food to the Triple Gems and tutelary deity before eating
13 Offer fivefold prostration to Buddha in ten directions
14 Sleep in a lion's posture after meditating on Deity Yoga.

According to the Newar Buddhist tradition, even after the disrobing ceremony of *Cudakarma,*[4] the Shakyas and Vajracaryas do not cease to be bhikksu (Sanskit; Pali bhikkhu) or Buddhist monks, but pass from the state of celibate bhikksu to that of grihastha bhikksu, a fact underlined by the term Shakyabhiksu used to refer to them down ages.

In the disrobing ceremony the following lines are relevant to the status of the bhikksu: "You have gone through Shravakayana and now come to Mahayana, the greatest of the Buddhist Yanas. You have participated in some Vajrayana rituals and after going through some higher ordinations you will know what Cakrasamvara is.[5]

Uposadhavrata practice of Avalokiteshvara[6]

Amoghapasa Lokeshvara is a multi-armed form of Avalokiteshvara that seems to have been popular in Nepal since the Middle Ages. The name suggests that he is the lord of the world with an infallible noose which leads suffering sentient beings to enlightenment. In Nepal as much as 360 forms of Avalokiteshvara are found in hymns or *stava*s but only 108 forms of Lokeshvara can be found in pictures with iconographic details. The SvP frequently describes the benefits of Uposadha vrata, and the image of Amoghapasha Lokeshvara, the patron deity of this rite, can be seen everywhere in Nepalese Bahas and Bahis.

Recitation of Namasangiti text

This has been one of the favorite devotional practices among Newar Buddhists. The subject matter of this text basically focuses on the five wisdoms of the enlightened state of Perfect Buddhahood.

The Cult of Manjusri

Stories of Manjusri are found across the Mahayana Buddhist world. In Nepal, a distinctive tradition of Manjusri stories is preserved within the several texts collectively known as the *Svayambhu Purana* (SvP). The legends of Bodhisattva Manjusri, according to SvP, date back to the pre-historical period, an epoch previous to the Iron Age. It is impossible, on the basis of these sources, to write an account of some historical figure from whom the stories of Manjusri might be derived.

However, according to the SvP, the Bodhisattva Manjusri came from China where he is traditionally said to live on the Five-Peaked Mountain, Wu-ta'i shan (*Panca shirsa parvata*). He came to the Kathmandu Valley during the time of Buddha Krakucchanda in order to drain the Nagahrada Lake and thus make the valley habitable land.

In the same cycle of stories, we encounter the Buddhist pandita Dharmashrimitra. He was a teacher at the great monastic university Vikramaśilå, in India. In order to learn the secret meaning of twelve letters or mantras within the *Manjushrinamasanagiti*, he set out for Nepal to ask for Manjusri's own teaching. We may presume the ninth century as the date of the Vikramashila monastery, because it was in the time of King Dharmapala that the monastery was built under the direction of Master Haribhadra, a great commentator of *Prajnaparamita* texts. King Dharmapala appears to have endowed the monastery with support for a faculty of 108 Panditas, one of whom would have been Dharmashrimitra. Vikramashila closed as a result of political instability in the later twelfth or early thirteenth centuries, and never reopened. From this we may deduce that the cult of Manjusri at Svayambhu was already well-established by the time of Dharmasrimitra, sometime between the ninth and twelfth centuries. The growth of Manjusri legends in the (SvP) from the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries may reflect the fact that Nepal was cut off from its southern neighbor, India, traditionally the source of Nepalese Buddhism, and looked instead to northeastern Asia. It was during this period that the relation between Nepal and China was at its height.

Integration of Shaiva and Buddhist tradition in Newar Buddhism

The development of the SvP text shows how Hinduization took place. In the sixth chapter of the present text we read: "The mind of those who offer prayers to the Eight

Vitaragas while bathing in the Vagmati will be pure. They will be prosperous. They will be fit for entering Sivaloka [the realm of Śiva] after enjoying worldly pleasures. Those who wash the *vitaraga* of Svayambhu with ghee will be entitled to *Sivaloka*. Those who wash it with honey will have access to *Brahmamandira* [the temple of Brahma]. Those who wash it with curds will have access to *Vaishnavaloka* [the realm of Vishnu]. Those who anoint it with scent, milk, and cool liquids will attain *Gandharvaloka* [the realm of heavenly musicians] and *Candraloka* [the realm of the Moon]." [7]

Hubert Decleer adds: "In this instance, a Buddhist text has clearly been tampered with, bowdlerized beyond recognition, so that however ancient the earliest dated manuscript may be, this version just cannot be the original." Decleer, on the other hand, suggests an alternative cause of this inclusivism. He says that this integrative style was adopted as an auto-defensive measure from within the Buddhist camp. "It is said that when Shankara Acarya, in the course of pillaging Buddhist scriptures, confronted a Buddhist text containing the name of Ganesha or Mahadeva, that text was spared from destruction."

The solution was quite different from those chosen in other Buddhist countries. The veneration of Svayambhu, Manjusri/Sarasvati, Guhyeshvari/Parvati, and the eight vitaragas/eight sites of *Lingeshvara*s was a powerful syncretic strategy on the part of Newar Buddhists.

Besides, they never abandoned such basic Buddhist practices as the triple refuge and the various *vrata*s (namely, the *uposadha vrata* as well as the *bodhivrata*), as the text relates. The lifestyle of an Adikarmic Bodhisattva (who performs basic rituals such as *vrata*) provides a strong basis for the retention of Vajrayanic traditions in a situation where monasticism is declining.

Decleer observes that "eventually, the Vajrayana became a closed system, accessible only to high caste Buddhists". Vajracaryas became the parallel of Brahmanic priests. However, Dr John K Locke points out that caste-based Vajrayana practices, although untenable from a strictly Buddhist viewpoint, worked well for centuries in a Hindu setting, preventing them from vanishing altogether. However, in India and other countries, the rejection of syncretic approaches to Hinduism, along with the pressure of Hindu or Afghan fundamentalism, led to the complete disappearance of Mahayana Buddhism.

"In Southeast Asia, the Siva-Buddhist syncretism, as witnessed in Java and Bali, resulted in only Saivism surviving, with only a few Buddhist names and symbols remaining. On the other hand, Southeast Asian countries such as Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Myanmar abandoned the Mahayana and Vajrayana altogether in favor of an exclusively Theravada tradition, which places major emphasis on the Vinaya. By contrast, Newar Buddhism survived relatively intact, preserving secret Mantra, even maintaining the language and the styles of the Sanskrit world."

One of the outstanding contributions of Newar Buddhism is that it has preserved thousands of original Sanskrit Buddhist manuscripts. The words of Suniti Kumar Chatterji, the famous Indian Buddhist scholar are worth mentioning: "One great service the people of Nepal did, particularly the highly civilized Newars of the Nepal valley, was the preservation of all the manuscripts of Mahayana Buddhist literature in Sanskrit; it was the contribution of Sri Lanka to have preserved for human kind the entire mass of the Pali literature of Theravada Buddhism. This was also the case with Burma, Cambodia and Siam. It was similarly the great achievement of people of Nepal to have preserved the equally valuable original Sanskrit texts of Mahayana Buddhism."

Observation of the Revival of the Theravada Buddhist Movement in Nepal

It is ironic that there were no Buddhist monks, especially Theravada Buddhist monks, in Nepal where Lord Buddha was born. Theravada Buddhist tradition had vanished from the land since the seventh century. The Rana regime in Nepal witnessed an entire century of persecution of Nepalese who became Buddhist monks between 1846 and 1951.The first to have been victimized were Nepalese converts to Tibetan Buddhism, followed closely by converts to Theravada Buddhism. All Buddhist activities were banned. Besides sending the monks into exile, it is said that the Ranas went to the extent of destroying Buddhist scriptures along with Tantric Buddhist texts.

In response to this persecution, a group of five monks led by the Ven. Mahaprajna appeared in the streets of Kathmandu in 1925 begging for alms, not in the form of a protest against persecution but as a peaceful demonstration. As a result, the five monks were exiled from Nepal and took shelter in Kushinagara where Lord Buddha attained great Parinirvana.

The Ven. U Chandramani Mahathera played one of the most important roles in the revival of the monastic order in modern Nepal. He ordained almost all the initial monks, sixteen of them, at Kusinagara and sent them to study in Myanmar. Moreover, the first three groups of anagarikas ordained with him on different occasions. The Ven. Sudarshan writes:[8] "The Ven. U Chandramani planted the seed of Theravāda Buddhism in Nepal; he is the propagator of Theravada to Nepalese society. Almost all the monks and nuns were ordained by him. Therefore, the Nepalese monks and nuns are his students". In addition to these eminent Burmese monks, during the first half of the last century, there were several equally eminent Sri Lanka monks such as Narada Maha Thera, Madihe Pannasiha Mahanayaka Thera and Weligama Nanaratana Maha Thera from the well-known Vajiraramaya monastery, Bmbalapitiya, Colombo, who contributed to strengthening of Nepalese Buddhism by intervening with the king on behalf of Nepalese Buddhists and by establishing *sima* (specifically approved space) for monastic *vinaya* (law) activities.

In this essay the author wishes to highlight the works of a few eminent Nepalese monks who contributed to the revival of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal.

The Ven. Dharmaloka

The Ven. Dharmaloka stated that he was the first Nepalese monk to wear the yellow robe. After a visit to Sri Lanka he brought yellow robes and a begging bowl with him. Having returned to Nepal he stayed at Kindole Vihara. The number of people taking part in religious ceremonies in the vihara then increased rapidly. At that point the police began to keep an eye on the activities of the group. In November 1931 a number of monks including Dhammaloka were arrested. Some of them were exiled; others were fined for distributing pamphlets and begging bowl for food.[9]

The Ven. Dharmaditiya Dharmacarya

The revival of Theravada Buddhism commenced when *Dharmaditya Dharmacarya*, who was born into the family of the Saptapur Mahavihara community in Patan city, commenced publishing Buddhist journals in India in the early 1930s. In order to reform Buddhism in Nepal he came to Kathmandu and after paying homage to Lord Svayambhu he inspected Kimdole Vihara. Seeing the dilapidated condition of the Vihara, he brought attention to the situation on the front page of the magazine *Buddha Dharma* and inspired the devotees to reconstruct it. He was the pioneer who celebrated the Buddha Jayanti Festival and was responsible for eradicating the sacrifice of animals in the Maya Devi Temple of Lumbini. Thus he played leading role in the upliftment of Nepalese Buddhist society.[10]

Dharmaditya Dharmacarya began publishing the magazine *Buddhadharma* in India in 1925 when Chandra Samshera was Nepal's Prime Minister. This was not just a time of religious revival; the British were also introducing compulsory examination papers in the vernacular to Indian universities. Dharmaditya Dharmacarya was persuaded to publish a joint Buddhist and literary magazine in the Nepal Bhasa language. As such, he was the first to introduce journalism in Nepal Bhasa. *Buddhadharma* magazine began a linguistic literary revolution, evoking mass participation in the spread of Buddhism. Dharmaditya Dharmacarya was the editor, manager and publisher.

He changed the magazine from its purely religious focus to include the promotion of literature, renaming it *Buddhadharma Nepal Bhasa*. The name change helped to avoid Government notice and censure by the Rana regime. Instead of just religious articles and news, he included literary articles on language and other topics. Dharmaditya's efforts were key to the revival of Buddhism in Nepal, using Nepal Bhasa to popularise Buddhism. Dharmaditya published the magazine for five years.[11]

The Ven. Mahaprajna

The Ven. Mahaprajna thera, a Hindu by birth, was first ordained in 1924 as a Buddhist monk by a Tibetan Lama, the Ven. Tsering Norbu, in Kathmandu. During the prime ministership of Chandra Shamser, the Ven. Mahaprajna along with four other monks were expelled from the Kathmandu Valley. Afterwards he traveled he went Lhasa and then made his way to India. In 1928, he became a Theravada monk in Kushinagara and was ordained by the Ven. Chandramani Mahathera.[12] In Bhojpur, Eastern Nepal, the Ven. Mahaprajna preached the Buddha's teaching extensively and went to Myanmar and studied Theravada Buddhism intensively and became a meditation master as well as foremost preacher of Dharma in Kathmandu.

The Ven. Amritananda Mahathera (1917-1992)

One of the outstanding Nepalese monks in the revival of Theravada Buddhism was the Ven.Amritananda Mahathera. In 1937, he left India for Burma to study Pali. Furthermore, there were two Nepalese Theravadin Monks at Moulmein in Upper Burma he wanted to meet – the Ven. Shakyananda Mahathera and the Ven. Anurudra Mahathera. Later he went to Sri Lanka and on January 25, 1940, he was ordained by the Ven. Dhammaraksita Vansalankara siri Palene Vajiranana Mahanayaka thera of Vajiraramaya, Colombo.[13]

Towards the end of 1942 he returned to Kathmandu, where there was no propagation of the dharma or preaching in public by bhikksus. Political troubles were growing rapidly. Four persons were given death sentences and many were sent to jail. Gatherings of any kind were prohibited. It was in such a context that the Ven. Amritananda preached the Dharma in public every morning for a month at Swayambhu Hill. It was a great success. He published several books in Nepali and Nepal

Bhasa. The Ven. Amritananda was unparalleled in the creation of Nepali literature.

Furthermore, the Ven. Amritananda founded The Ananda Kuti Vihara Trust at Ananda Kuti Vihara, and began to publish translations of Pali texts into Nepali, officially the national language of Nepal. The Trust published more than forty books, including all the works translated from Pali within decades of its establishment. The Dharmodaya Sabha, founded in 1944, also published a series of more than 180 titles by 1951, which served as a valuable nucleus for a modern literary revival in Nepal. The Ven. Amritananda established the All Nepal Bhikksu Association, traveled widely promoting Dhamma, and translated and published many Buddhist texts. Through his charismatic personality he influenced both King Tribhuvan and his son King Mahendra and they were supportive of Theravada revival movements.

Anagarika Dhammavati, a Theravadin activist in the nuns' movement says: "The Theravada movement introduced a sense of freedom and awareness of the possibility of education among women, by opening their schools to all and thus breaking centuries-old barriers of sex discrimination. The revival of Theravada Buddhism was the revival of education and awareness of literature in Nepal."

Sarah LeVine writing about female ordination in Nepal maintains:[14] "For women, ordination is an act of emancipation rather than 'renunciation' as it is for men. Undoubtedly some adult female recruits "go into homelessness" in order to have more time to meditate and to study Buddhadharma but all are motivated by the urgent desire to escape marriage and motherhood which, despite the fact that women are now entering the professions in considerable numbers, is still widely regarded as the only legitimate adult female role."

Observation on the Influence of Tibetan Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley

In the past the Tibetan Buddhist masters such as Marpa, Milarepa, Rwa Lotsava, Ras Chungpa, Dharma Swami, XIII Karmapa, and XVI Karmapa, visited and traveled in the Kathmandu Valley. However, the largest group of Tibetans came in the 1960s. Many settled in the regions of Svayambhu and Baudha Stupas. Many other famous Lamas known throughout the world have their Buddhist monasteries and centers located in the Kathmandu Valley. In this section, I shall try to focus on the contribution of the important Lamas in the Kathmandu Valley to the development of Tibetan Buddhism among Newar Buddhists from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards.

Contribution of Lama Tshe-ring Nor-bu[15]

When Sakyasri Lama of Kham was actively working on the restoration of Svayambhu Mahacaitya - a rare monument in Asia dignified by its glorious sanctity - under the supervision of Dharma Man Tuladhar, a lama called Tshe-ring Norbu, who was devoted to Svayambhu Mahacaitya, came to know of this news, and went to the site to and in a meritorious act volunteered as a laborer while the restoration was underway between the years NS 1038–1041 (1917-1920). Although the Lama was of unremarkable appearance, his character appears to have been extraordinary. After the renovation was complete, he went on retreat for six years in the Mahasiddha cave of Balaju, Kathmandu, free from all the entanglements of household life, and later taught the Buddha's teachings to his disciples. Furthermore, he taught the importance of the monastic life in the Buddha dharma, and spread these teachings widely.

In the period when King Jayasthitimalla organized the people into a caste system according to their profession, the Buddhist monks of the Nepalese Buddhist tradition - namely, the Shakyabhiksus and Vajracaryas - thought that it was sufficient to live as a celibate monk for only four days. Moreover, they continued to hold the obstinate view that non-Buddhists should not be ordained as monks. It was under these circumstances that Tshe-ring Norbu ordained five Nepalese monks at the Mahasiddha cave, in accordance with the rules of the Vinaya. The candidates, followed by their ordained names, were:

1. Prem Bahadur Shrestha - Mahaprajna
2. Buddha Ratna Shakya - Mahacandra
3. Dalcini Manandhar - Mahajnana
4. Bekharaj Brahmacarya Bhikksu - Mahavirya
5. Jnanaratna Shakya - Mahaksanti

When the newly ordained monks were seen in their Tibetan monastic clothing, those who opposed their ordination registered a complaint with the police. As a result, both the ordained monks and their master were sent into exile from the Nepal Valley, and warned that they would be arrested and jailed if they returned to Kathmandu. They traveled to Calcutta, where they met Mr Dharmaditya Dharmacharya of Cikan Bahil, Lalitpur. He arranged for them to stay at the Mahabodhi Society and published news of the Nepalese government's prejudice in Indian journals. Afterwards, some of these monks went to Tibet, while other went to Akyab in Burma to study Buddhism. Eventually, the Ven. Tsering Norbu Lama returned to Manicuda Daha in Kathmandu, sat in the samadhi of Asphanaka Yoga, and passed away.

Contribution of Kyangtse Lama[16]

Kyantse Lama appears to have been a plain man, but he was devoted to the true dharma of Buddhism and his lineage masters. Born in Gyantse, Tibet, he was determined to meet an authentic guru from whom he could receive the true Dharma, so that he could achieve something with his life. He relinquished the whole of his family's property in order to follow his root guru, who was from Gonggu in the Kham province of Northern Tibet.

He arrived without impediment at the place where his root guru was staying and immediately prostrated himself before his guru in the traditional manner and became his disciple. On one occasion his guru highly praised the Glorious Svayambhu Mahacaitya of Nepal. As a result, he became anxious to visit the Glorious Mahacaitya. Since he was unfamiliar with the route to Kathmandu, he asked his guru how to get there. Understanding the pure motivation of his disciple, the guru displayed a clear vision of Svayambhu Mahacaitya in a ritual mirror, out of the sheer power of his merit and meditative accomplishments.

While displaying this marvelous image of Svayambhu Mahacaitya in the mirror, the guru instructed his disciple in this manner: "In the course of your pilgrimage to the Glorious Svayambhu, if by chance you lose your way or take a wrong turn, you are to remember and meditate upon the vision I have shown you in the mirror. You will then see clearly the road to Svayambhu Mahacaitya (*'Phags pa sing kun*)."

Respectfully accepting his guru's instruction, he departed for Nepal. Before his departure, he made the following resolution to reach his destination: "Whatever sufferings may befall me on my journey to Nepal, be they from blizzards, rain or wind, weather hot or cold, I shall bear them all. I shall make prostrations all the way from my guru's residence to Glorious Svayambhu Mahacaitya, regardless of whether the road is paved or strewn with thorns. This impermanent body of mine shall traverse the path to enlightenment." After making this commitment, he sought blessings from his master and departed.

Having the blessings of his master, the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas, he reached Nepal with pure mind, and full of zeal and energy. It took him four-and-a-half years to reach the hills of Svayambhu. Having arrived at Svayambhu on the auspicious full moon day of the month of Phalguna in the year NS 1045, (1924) he was overjoyed and paid homage to Glorious Svayambhu Mahacaitya.

Those who respected and were familiar with Tibetan Buddhism came to know the greatness of his qualities, knowledge and conduct. The first man who recognized him as a great sage was Mr Dharma Man Tuladhar of Tanlachi, Kathmandu. He organized a great reception for him with respect and devotion, and brought him to his shrine room. Following his request, Kyangtse Lama gave a discourse on the text of *Kun bZang lama'i zha lung* ("Words of My Perfect Teacher") in his residence.

Many Nepalese people came to understand the essence of Buddhism by listening to his teachings. As a result of the merit of his outstanding devotion to Glorious Svayambhu Mahacaitya, and his austere practice of prostration without heed to his physical body, people's devotion to the Buddhist dharma strengthened.

After completing his program of discourses, his followers, not yet satiated, requested another set of dharma teachings in various localities of the Kathmandu Valley. Out of compassion for his followers, he gave a series of teachings at Svayambhu/Gopuccha hill; Nagabahal, Patan; the residences of the Dhakhva family; Adipadma Vihara, Bhaktapur; Amaravativihara, Bungmati; and Kirtipur. Due to the impact of these activities, many Buddhists as well as non-Buddhists became familiar with the Buddhist teachings. Whenever he gave teachings, as many as five or six thousand listeners were present. Undoubtedly, this was a momentous event in the history of Nepalese Buddhism. His audiences also seem to have been attentive and well-mannered.

Two essential themes ran throughout the course of his teaching activities:

1. Outer preliminary practice (*ngon dro*); the teaching of the four mind-changing practices:
   The preciousness of a human body
   Impermanence
   Law of cause and effect
   The sufferings of samsara which lead to the path to enlightenment.
2. Inner preliminary practice; the six preliminary practices to be formed at first:
   Taking refuge (prostration)
   Bodhicitta practice
   Offering the mandala
   Vajrasattva recitation
   Guru yoga
   Pho wa (transference of consciousness) practice

Contribution of Lama Sonam Tendzin[17]

The Ven. Lama Sonam Tenzin was a citizen of Ladakh. Because of his association with virtuous friends, he became a disciple of Sakyasri Lama, a mahasiddha well known in the Kham province of Tibet. He went on receiving many instructions and initiations into the Buddhist teachings of Sakyasri Lama and finally came to Kathmandu to visit Glorious Svayambhu Mahacaitya. After visiting

Svayambhu and other historical sites, he passed several days in retreat at a secluded place near Tamanna. During his first few days, he lived rough, with the most meager of possessions. But with great confidence in his practice, he later acquired many disciples and spiritual friends.

His virtues and qualities became widely known. Thinking that it would soon be difficult for his disciples to meet him, he settled in a small hut in the Nagi hills between Budhanilkantha and Bagdvar. Since this place was easier for his disciples to visit, many people flocked to him to receive his teachings, and the dharma spread widely throughout the kingdo.

Although many incarnate Lamas (Rinpoches), outstanding Buddhist masters (Acaryas), Geshes, and abbots and monks of the Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug Buddhist traditions came to Kathmandu and visited Svayambhu, the language barrier prevented the dissemination of Buddhist teachings among the local populace but for a handful of people who understand the Tibetan language.

When the Ven. Lama Kyang-tse was teaching, he had to be assisted by translators like Pandita Buddhi Raja Shakya and Bekharatna Sahu. But it was not always possible to have such able translators, so the Ven. Lama Sonam Tendzin, during his sojourn in the Kathmandu Valley, learnt Nepali, Tamang, and Newar languages, thereby facilitating his extensive preaching of the dharma.

In this way, he amassed a great number of disciples from Kantipur, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur, and Sherpa and Tamang disciples from other villages. His disciples' contributions transformed his small hut into a beautiful monastery. Later he also built other monasteries. During his sojourn in Nagi Gompa, the Tibetan form of Vajrayana Buddhism spread widely throughout the Kathmandu Valley. Nagi Gompa was a great centre for Vajrayana Buddhist learning for Nepal.

Contribution of the Ven. Urgyen Tulku Rinpoche and his son Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche

In the 1970s, the Ven. Urgyen Tulku Rinpoche established the Ka-Nying Shedrupling monastery at Bodhanath. This monastery, commonly called the White Monastery, is one of the largest in the Kathmandu Valley. After the completion of the monastery, Rinpoche invited His Holiness the sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa to come and confer all the empowerment and transmissions of Kagyu Ngakdzo (the treasury of Kagyu Mantras), and His Holiness graciously accepted.

The Ven. Urgyen Tulku Rinpoche seemed very compassionate towards his Newar disciples. In spite of illness he performed Phowa practices twice for the benefit of his Newar disciples. He gave several teachings on the Mahayana and Vajrayana practices to his Newar disciples at various places in Patan and Kathmandu.

In this monastery reside more than 200 Buddhist monks and nuns. The abbot is the Ven. Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche. The principal Lamas are His Eminence Chokling Rinpoche and Chonyi Rinpoche. The Ven. Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche also offers an annual Rangjung Yeshe Seminar for Western Dharma students. During the seminar, Rinpoche provides teachings on the aspects of Buddhist doctrines as well as private instructions for retreat. Rinpoche receives visitors every morning and offers guidance in Dharma matters. Rinpoche is very popular among his Newar disciples for his numerous teachings on Mahayana Buddhist practices and sometimes he teaches in the Nepali language and in broken Nepal Bhasa. His brother Choknyi Rinpoche also conducts five day Buddhist retreat programs at the Halchowk monastery behind Svayambhu for the Newar Buddhists.

Contribution of the Ven. Thrangu Rinpoche

Five hundred years ago the seventh Gyalwa Karmapa founded Thrangu monastery and appointed one of his most gifted disciples, the first Thrangu Tulku, to be its abbot. The present Thrangu Rinpoche is the ninth incarnation of the Thrangu Tulkus and was born in Tibet in 1933. He holds the teaching degree of Geshe Rabjam, which is the highest degree of the four Tibetan lineages, and he was chosen by the sixteenth Karmapa to be the personal tutor of his four regents namely, Tai situpa, Sharmapa, Gyaltshap, and Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche.

He founded his own monastery, Thrangu Tashi Choeling at Boudha, a retreat center and monastic college at Namo Buddha, east of the Kathmandu Valley. He has given a series of teachings to Newar Buddhists at the Golden Temple, Patan, and has been the spiritual director of the Nagarjuna Institute. His published works includes *Buddha Nature, the King of Samadhi Sutra,* and so forth. For details of his publications visit the website www.rinpoche.com.

Contribution of the Ven. Lama Zopa Rinpoche

The Ven. Lama Zopa Rinpoche was born in 1946 in the Solokhumbu region of Nepal and was recognized at the age of three as the reincarnation of Lawudo Lama, a great meditator from that area. Rinpoche entered the Dungkar monstery in Tibet where he studied until 1959, when he escaped to India and continued his studies in Buxaduar in Eastern India. Soon afterwards, he started receiving teachings from Lama Yeshe, remaining with him as his heart disciple.

In 1969, the Ven. Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche established the Foundation for the Preservation of Mahayana Tradition at Kopan Monastery. Lama Zopa Rinpoche organized a series of Buddhist discourses especially for the benefit of Newar disciples. He appointed Geshe Lopsang Jhampa, a highly learned Lharampa Geshe to teach to the Newar disciples on Bodhicitta and Mind training practices. On the initiative of the author a weeklong discourse program was arranged on the "Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment by Atisha Dipamkara" at the premise of Hiranya varna Mahavihara. More than thousand Newar Buddhists attended the program.

Since its inception, FPMT has established more than hundred and fifty centers around the world. http:/www.kopanmonastery.com

Some challenges in the present situation

It seems that after the Chinese occupation of Tibet, the Kathmandu Valley has become the base of Tibetan Buddhism. The Tibetans are giving more emphasis to their own community because they are afraid that their culture may vanish due to Chinese encroachment. The lamas are devoting much more of their time and energy to Westerners than the Nepalese because they are getting more financial support from them.

On the other hand, all the Nepalese Lamas and monks following the Tibetan tradition must learn the Tibetan language to read Tibetan texts and receive Tibetan teachings. However, local people in these Himalayan regions are ignorant of the language in letters and spirit. They learn to perform pujas and rituals but they hardly have any opportunity to learn the language or Buddhist teachings.

In addition, in the Himalayan regions the monasteries are built at higher altitudes and Buddhist masters are not willing to visit these places to give teachings. As a result, the propagation of Dharma in these remote areas has become very difficult though not impossible. Supporting or educating these people living in the outlying areas is a great challenge.

Furthermore, the standard of living of these Himalayan people is extremely low, so they cannot afford to descend the Kathmandu Valley for study. Most of the places are still outlying and remote districts that are inaccessible by land transport.

No Buddhist organization is seriously concerned about these problems. Nowadays Muslims and Christians missions are very active. Christian missionaries provide education and aid, thus the religion is taking root in the hills. Muslims are also giving support by visiting their communities, becoming familiar with the people and inter-marrying with them. Then, within the context of marriage, wives and children must accept the religion. In this way, the Buddhist population in the entire Himalayan region is diminishing both in spirit and number because of absolute poverty and lack of Buddhist education.

If a definitive initiative is not taken immediately, Buddhists of the world will see Nepal, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, being dominated by Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. It is noteworthy that the Tibetans in the Kathmandu Valley are doing well. They have received a considerable financial support from the West and from South East Asia.

But the Nepalese people who follow Tibetan tradition in the Himalayan regions including Newars are the ones who suffer due to the lack of Buddhist education and financial support. Only a few people have opportunities to study in Tibetan monastic universities, Dharmasala, or Tibetan Higher Studies at Sarnath or in South Indian settlements.

From the census data, we have a negative indication about the true nature of the distribution of Buddhist population. Many erudite scholars have raised questions on the validity of census data, especially in regard to the recognition or identification of Buddhists and Hindus.

It is regrettable that the Buddhist population in Nepal according to census data was 17% in 1961, 13% in 1971, 5% in 1981, 7% in 1991 and 10% in 2001. The number of Buddhists in Nepal is shrinking. It is a deliberate policy of minimizing the Buddhist population and clearing the path to declare Nepal as a Hindu kingdom. Our country has recently experienced many trials and tribulations and eventually a new government that has resulted from the people's movement has recently declared Nepal a secular country. I hope that the number of Buddhists in Nepal can exceed more than fifty percent of the total population if the census is taken genuinely with appropriate measures and without bias.

Conclusion

We have presented briefly how Indic Buddhism was transformed in Nepal especially in the Kathmandu valley. As we have described, the very concept of a triple refuge has been changed. It concerns Adi-buddha as the Buddha jewel, Dharma as nine scriptures, and the Sangha as eight bodhisattvas. Among them Aryavalokiteshvara became the chief of all the bodhisattvas. That's why he was called Jtheewel of Sangha, in Newari terms Sangha Ratna Karunamaya.

Concerning Hindu-Buddhist syncretism, in my own humble opinion Newar Buddhists must prepare a series of survival strategies or policies of amalgamation –

technically speaking, skill in means (*upayakaushalya*) – for the survival of their own form of Buddhism. This was the form of Buddhism prevalent in the Kathmandu Valley.

Then after the renaissance of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal some outstanding monks contributed much through their selfless sacrifice by preaching Buddha's Dharma in adverse circumstances. A series of changes in the outlook of Nepalese Buddhist society appeared through Theravadin perspectives. Theravada monks and nuns grew in number: there are three distinct Theravada lineages of monks and nuns from Sri Lanka, Thailand and Myanmar.

The revival of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal, then, made two very important contributions in this area: the awareness of literature and the creation of literature.

Another stream of Buddhist influences came from Tibetan Buddhist Masters. After the Chinese takeover of Tibet, many Tibetan Buddhist masters seemed to have taken shelter in Kathmandu Valley. Nepalese Buddhists have great faith in them.

Notes

1 The Tantric origin of these five Buddhas is described in *Guhyasamaja tantra* (eight-ninth century). But the images of Amitabha and Aksobhya seemed to have appeared in the early centuries of the Christian era.

2 According to the findings of Prof. Lewis Lancaster reported in *The Oldest Mahayana Sutra: Its Significance for the Study of Buddhist Development in The Eastern Buddhist,* 1975, pp. 30-41, this is the oldest Mahayana sutra.

3 See Adikarmapradipa (ed) in *Louis de La Vallée Poussin's Bouddhisme Etides et Materiaux*, Luzac & Co., 1898.

4 Hair cutting ceremony during ordination.

5 Allen, endnote No. 3, pp. 1-10.

6 For details see John Locke on "Uposadhavrata of Amoghapâßa Lokeßvara in Nepal", in lLethnographie, Publiee par la Society d'Ethnographie, Paris 1987.

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8 Bhikkhu Sudarshan, "Jhi Guru Chandranmani Mahāsthavir", Lumanke Bahapin, Bhikkhu Sudarshan (ed.), (Kathmandu: Lasata Press, 2533 BE), pp. 1-10.

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14 Sarah E LeVine, "The Evolution of the Theravada Nuns' Order of Nepal", Cambridge: Ph.D. A Thesis presented to Harvard University, 2001. p. 288.

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17 For his activity on recitation of Kanjur see also ibid.p.354.

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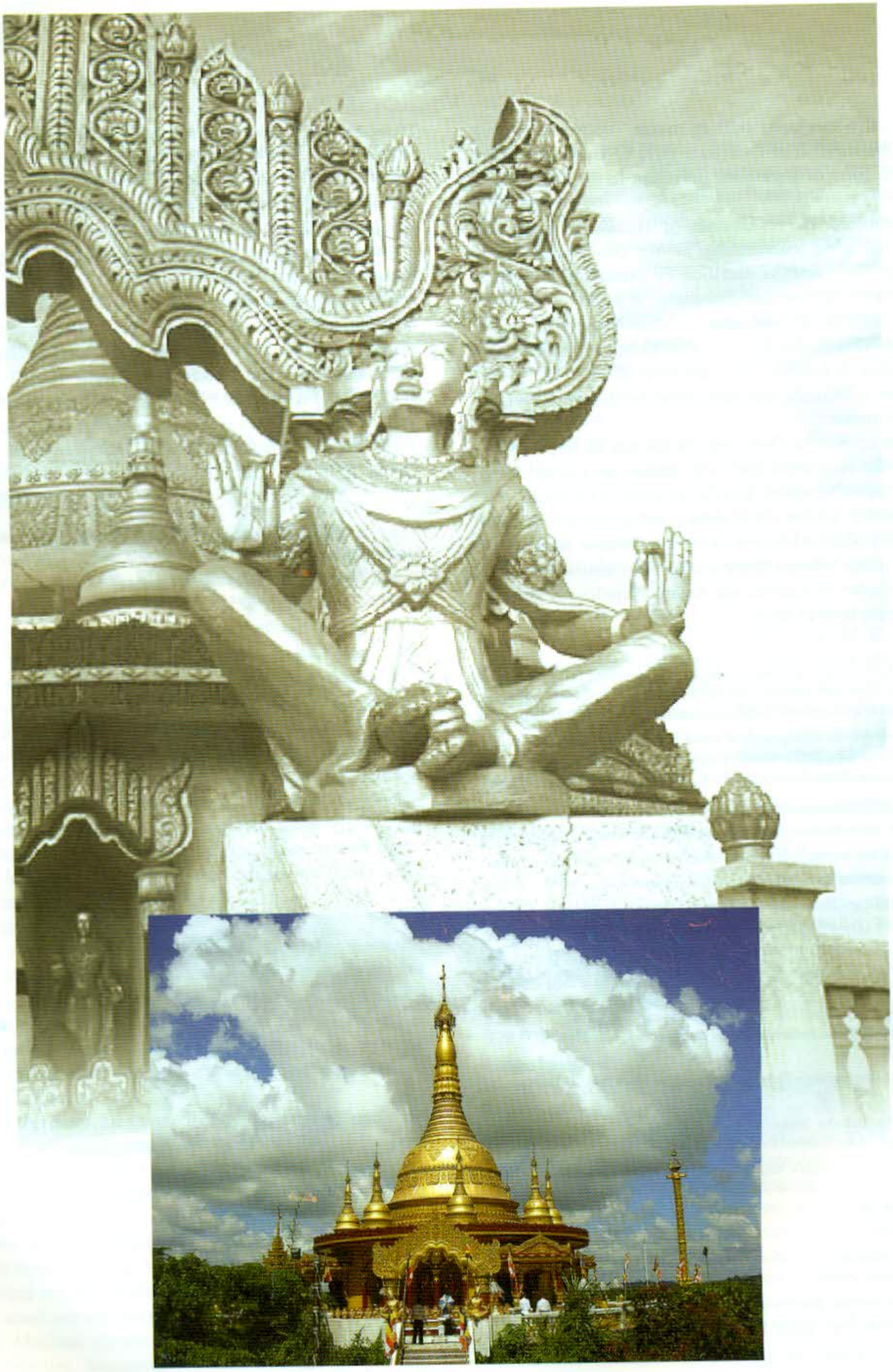

The Bandarban Golden Temple

ESSAY 6

Buddhism in Bangladesh

Reclaiming Bangladeshi Buddhist Heritage Forgotten by the Buddhist World

Bhikkhu Saranapala

Introduction

As Bangladeshi Buddhists join the Buddhist world to celebrate the 2600th Sambuddhatva Jayanti – the Awakening of the Buddha - it is appropriate to review the past state of Buddhism in Bangladesh, portray the present, and anticipate the future in the light of its people, socio-economic and political history, and, above all, the development of its language and culture.

To achieve this it is necessary to backtrack beyond the date of the official birth of the modern nation called Bangladesh into the Bangladeshi people's glorious past and their checkered history, cultural heritage, and ancient religions. What must not be forgotten is the religious and social persecutions they suffered under Hindu and Islamic fanaticism from the end of the twelfth century CE to the present era, and the sacrilegious and arbitrary "reunification" imposed by the British to obliterate the unitary, self-supporting entity called Vanga, which robbed the Vanga (Bengali) people of their precious indigenous territory.

There is no better time for scholars to study the metamorphosis of Bangladesh as a distinct entity possessing a just claim to be a modern nation with a unique identity of its own. It is also time for the world to help Bangladesh fulfill the inner yearning of its people to rediscover themselves within the reality of the present context – rectifying where it can the gross aberrations and the wanton travesties of justice that Bangladeshis have suffered and are painfully aware of. The time has also come to address the glaring need to sensitize Bengalis regarding the correct understanding of the forces that militated against their pristine unity and robbed them of their cherished native land.

Beyond the Mojibur Rahman Experiment

Praiseworthy as it was, Sheik Mojibur Rahman's patriotic move reflected only one aspect of a people's yearning for sovereignty; the other, whether intended or not, is the responsibility of coping with the avalanche of changes, expected and unexpected, brought to the larger Vanga community, given the diversity of sub-cultures and parochial aspirations that naturally compete with one another for prominence.

Dealing with this scenario demands wisdom, understanding and reflection, together with leadership/statesmanship that must necessarily come from within Bangladesh. Such a homespun solution based on principles of equity, justice and fair play common to the basic tenets of both Islam and Buddhism - if adhered to as the nation's policy - would fulfill the cherished hopes of the Bangladeshi polity and help deliver a mature nation exemplifying the desirable concept of true unity in diversity.

If the Bangla Rebellion of 1971 under Sheik Mojibur Rahman demonstrates anything, it is the indelible, undeniable, and natural yearning shared by all subjugated peoples on earth to rediscover themselves, to renew their spirit and stand among nations as free and sovereign human beings with pride and dignity. To put it another way, as the Bangladeshi situation clearly shows, it is the irresistible urge to hearken back to the people's roots. Even an artificially imposed religion, or a system of beliefs howsoever strongly entrenched, cannot deter the inner spirit of a people and their deep-seated yearning to redefine themselves, rediscover their language and homely idiom, and their culture. This becomes more pronounced if the imposed system of beliefs - such as Islam in the case of Bangladesh - does not lend itself fully to the fulfillment and furtherance of the subjugated peoples' cultural aspirations. Fulfillment lies in taking Mujibur Rahman's struggle a step beyond the creation of the country called Bangladesh into the enlightenment of the masses; to the glory days of its rich heritage sanctified by Buddhism. Given the existing circumstances in Bangladesh, particularly the type of inbred religious fundamentalism, this may well be wishful thinking and the dream may never be fulfilled in the future.

Scholars who study Bangladesh Buddhism and culture are wont to trace the history of its politics, economy, arts and culture hailing from the nebulous sixth century BCE within a dismally brief continuum of forty years. They explain that Bangladesh appeared on the global stage as an independent and sovereign nation not so long ago, in 1971.[1]

The architect of the "New Bangladesh" was Sheik Mojibur Rahman, known as "Bangabandhu – friend of Bangladesh." Carved out of a breakaway territory from Pakistan, which was then called East Pakistan, Bangladesh was born to become a secular country from 1971 to 1975.[2]

In this period no religion was supported under the new constitution. However, in the face of constant pressure on the government to make Islam the only state religion of Bangladesh, patriotism waned and Fundamentalism gained ground. Pro-Pakistani and Islamic forces murdered "Bangabandhu" and the two military leaders who succeeded him introduced strict Islamic values into the lives of Bangladesh and its people.

Context

Scholars agree that prior to Islam's first appearance in the Bangladesh region during the twelfth century CE Buddhism had prevailed in Bangladesh. Bangladeshis (Vanga people/Bengalis/Bangalis) worshipped the Buddha and practiced the Dhamma from the time he lived. The history of India dealing with the Buddha-worshipping Pala Dynasty attests to this fact. In contrast, Buddhism has today become the religion of a very small percentage of the Bangladesh population. Yet historical and archaeological findings ascertain that for centuries Buddhism had made a significant contribution to the sociopolitical stability and wellbeing of the people of the region. Invasions by Islamic rulers, and in modern times the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism (though recently curbed by the government of Bangladesh) have pushed Buddhism to the brink of extinction in the country.

However, Bangladeshi Buddhists – Baruas, Chakmas, Marmas and other small communities – do still continue to maintain Bengali Buddhist cultural values and rituals. Buddhists were able to maintain their cherished authentic cultural elements, folkways and mores - a whole civilization the inheritance of which can be traced to the golden era of Bangladeshi Buddhism during the Buddhist Pala dynasty. Remember that Bangladesh is world's third biggest Islamic country.[3]

As already mentioned, Buddhism was the major religion of Bangladeshis for centuries. Extensive study of copper plates and stone slab inscriptions discovered at Paharpur, the biggest Buddhist monastery of the time, also indicates the contribution of Buddhism to the civilization of the Bengali nation. The *Charjapad/ Charyapada* collection of mystical poems/songs of Buddhists in the Bengali language shed light on the lifestyles of the Bangladeshi people; how they have framed their harmonious lives based on Buddhist teachings and Buddhist cultural values.[4] What do we know about Buddhism in Bangladesh? Why in the past did Bangladesh lose its dominant Buddhist religion? What is the present state of Buddhism in Bangladesh? What's in store for the future of Buddhism in Bangladesh? These are questions that I shall now answer.

Paharpur Buddhist Monastery(Somapura Mahavihara)

Past State of Buddhism in Bangladesh

Shamsul Hossain in his article "Ancient Buddhist Monastic Establishments in Bangladesh" comments that "In south-east Bangladesh [Cox's Bazar bordering Burma/Myanmar; Chittagong; the Chittagong Hill Tracks bordering India; Noakhali and Barisal] Buddhism flourished under the patronage of Buddhist dynasties. Archaeological remains, epigraphic records and Chinese accounts delineate a golden period in Buddhist history."[5] In fact archeological ruins of Buddhist monasteries in Teknaf city in south-east Bangladesh to Bamiyan city in Afghanistan indicate that Buddhism thrived and occupied a prominent position in the Indian continent. According to Huang Tsang's travel reports Bangladesh was the stronghold for all schools of Buddhism – Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana. With the invasion of Bangladesh by Islamic rulers since the end of the twelfth century CE, the Buddhist population began to decrease and became a minority community. However, a small percentage of Buddhists is still visible in some major cities: Chittagong, the port city of Bangladesh, the Chittagong Hill Tracks, Comilla, Noakhali, Dhaka and Barisal. They have retained their Buddhist identity and tradition in the face of persecution.

Let's take a retrospective glance at the history of the region, now known as Bangladesh, which is irretrievably linked to the once thriving Vanga country.

Sri Lankan Buddhists claim that the Buddha visited their Island three times, as recorded in their ancient chronicles, the *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa*, considered reliable primary sources. Like Sri Lankan Buddhists, Bangladeshi Buddhists too claim that the Buddha visited Bangladesh. In the absence of sources such as Sri Lanka's chronicles, the archaeological findings from ruined monasteries, edicts of Emperor Asoka of the third century BCE, Avadana texts and travel reports of the

Chinese pilgrims[6] Fa-Hien (fifth century CE), Hieun-Tsang (middle of seventh century CE), and It-sing (end of seventh century CE) become the only sources at the disposal of the researcher. Nevertheless, they lend credence to the claim of Bangladeshi Buddhists that the religion had taken firm roots in their nation and had given impetus to the birth of a great Bengali civilization based on Buddhist teachings.[7] *Charyapada*, composed by the Buddhist Siddhacharyas and Sahajayanis from the eighth century CE to the tenth century CE, reveals how Bangladeshis enjoyed a stable and harmonious social life in the rural and urban areas.[8]

Under the Asokan Empire

The Buddha commenced his mission of Dhamma at Sarnath out of great compassion for humanity. During his time the message had reached some neighboring kingdoms and later it spread far and wide in all areas of India, including the present Bangladesh, during the reign of Emperor Asoka. The Buddha's compassionate mission had reached its zenith in regions under the patronage of royal dynasties. However, that golden era vanished in some regions due to the lack of state support and political instability. Bangladesh was once known as "Pundravardhana" and "Samatata" and "Karnasuvarna." These names appear in the Avadana texts. Dr Enamul Haque in his research article "Buddhist Sculpture in Bangladesh" states: "In an appraisal of history it is found that Buddhism spread to Bangladesh, particularly in its northern regions, before Mauryan Emperor Asoka's time. However, it can be said that during the time of Asoka, Buddhism was established in the northern part of Bangladesh. Pundravardhana or northern Bengal was part of the vast Asokan Empire. It is known from the famous Brahmi inscription of Mahasthan that in the third century BCE the people of Pundravardhana were given paddy from the royal granaries and money from the royal treasury during times of great calamity. This is just one of the oldest examples of royal patronage under the influence of Buddhism."[9]

The *Avadana* texts, composed later in the history of Indian Buddhism, support the contention that Buddhism was a dominant presence in Bangladesh during the time of the Buddha and prior to the Mauryan dynasty. The suppression by Hindu Sen rulers and Muslim rulers, during which Buddhist monasteries and libraries were torched, deprived the nation of a wealth of valuable and significant information. Still, myths and legends of Bangladeshi Buddhists extant to this day suggest that either the Buddha visited Bangladesh or his teachings had been brought to this region by some of his disciples who were from present Bangladesh.

I am in agreement with the theory that the Buddha's teachings could have reached Bangladesh soon after the Buddha emerged in the world as the Fully Enlightened One. In spite of the paucity of historical findings, the Vinaya texts record a meeting of the Buddha with two merchants, Tapassu and Bhalluka (*dvevacika upasaka*). On their way to Suvannabhumi (present-day Burma/Myanmar and Thailand), these merchants had encountered the Buddha just before he began his mission. The merchants were privileged to have had the opportunity to offer some food to the Buddha. As a token to mark this historic meeting the merchants had asked for some relics. It is said that the Buddha gave them hair relics which in turn were taken to Suvannabhumi. Presumably these merchants were taking the famous trade route that cut through Chittagong to reach Suvannabhumi. Geographically, Burma/Myanmar shares the border of south-east Bangladesh. Given that this event merited a special place in the Buddhist scriptures it is speculated that the merchants could have shared the teachings of the Buddha with some Bangladeshis on their way to Suvannabhumi, suggesting that the Buddha's teachings reached Bangladesh 2,600 years ago.

As mentioned above, the *Avadana* texts include names found in Bangladesh indicating that Buddhism was one time a major religion there. The *Divyavadana*, *Asokavadana*, and *Bodhisattvavadana Kalpalata* reveal that the Buddha visited "Pundravardhana," present-day North Bengal, "Samatata,"

Bandarban Golden Temple

A statue at the Golden Temple

present-day Chittagong, the Noakhali and Comilla regions of south-east Bengal, and "Karnasuvarna," present-day Murshidabad of West Bengal. According to the *Bodhisattvavadana Kalpalata,* written by Ksemendra in the eleventh century CE, the Buddha visited Bangladesh upon a request made by a noble lady, Sumagadha, who was one of Anathapindika's daughters given in marriage to a Setthi (a count) in Bangladesh. Upon her request the Buddha had visited Bangladesh and spent six months teaching the Dhamma in the region.[10] The *Avadanasata*[11] also supports this event. Buddhist canonical texts speak highly of Anathapindika, who was a great lay supporter of the Buddha. It is possible that his children could have been exposed to the Triple Gem, the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, prior to their marriages to different Setthis belonging to different faiths. Ardent devotee Sumagadha had wanted to see the Buddha in person and hear his teachings firsthand. She probably requested the Buddha's presence in her in-laws' house and the Buddha may have visited them as a favor to Anathapindika.[12]

Furthermore, the *Samyutta Nikaya*, one of the Buddhist canonical texts, contains a Sutta that records a village by the name of Setaka which is located in Bangladesh. If this is true then the Buddha did visit Bangladesh.

The One Vanga Nation Concept

India during the time of the Buddha was divided into sixteen *Janapadas* or kingdoms. It was the British who unified these kingdoms as "India" under collective rule. Vanga was one of the kingdoms, which shared a border with the neighboring Buddhist Magadha Kingdom. Magadha was where most of the Buddha's travel and missionary work took place. There's no denying that Magadha did exercise a formidable influence on Vanga. According to some scholars, Bangladesh was at times referred to as a province of Magadha. That the teaching of the Buddha reached the terrain of Vanga is no conjecture, therefore, but a plausible historical fact. Prior to Emperor Asoka, it was a hive of Buddhist missionary activity. According to Gayatri Sen Majumder "The religion of Buddha came to Bengal along with Jainism and Ajivikism."[13] Dipankar Srijnan Barua, in his article "Buddhism in Bengal: The Period of Propagation" discusses the various territorial divisions of ancient Bangladesh: "The present Bengal (Bengali speaking area in Bangladesh and west Bengal) was divided into a number of territorial divisions under different names in ancient and early mediaeval India. These were Gauda, Vanga, Samatata, Pundravardhana, Tamralipti, Harikela, Chandradipa, Rada, Suhma Vangala and Varendri. From time to time the boundary of these divisions changed. Vanga and Gauda have been the most powerful provinces."[14] Buddhism had spread in these regions.

In the *Anguttara Nikaya* there is mention of a monk named Vangantaputta, and in the *Samyutta Nikaya* and *Theragatha* there is another monk by the name of Vangisa, who was a poet. Scholars believe that both "Vangantaputta and Vangisa were inhabitants of Bengal."[15] The talented poet Vangisa had composed poems of amusement in the presence of the Buddha and his disciples. He narrates his autobiography in verse:

Vange Jatoti Vangiso Vacane Issarotica.
Vangiso iti me namam abaddho loko sammato.

Further, Vangisa's name appears in the *Ananda Sutta* of *Samyutta Nikaya* and *Subhasita Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipata*. In his youth, having acquired an education, Vangisa went to Rajagaha, where he met the Ven. Sariputta, the chief disciple of the Buddha. Vangisa composed an exquisite poem and read it to the Ven. Sariputta who admonished him on the subject of renunciation that brings liberation from suffering. Vangisa was converted to Buddhism by the Ven. Sariputta who later brought him into the presence of the Buddha. Vangisa is said to have had a second conversion while in the presence of the Buddha. In his verse uttered above, the Ven. Vangisa tells us that he was born in Vanga, or Bangladesh. Although some argue that the Buddha may not have traveled to Bangladesh, there is clear evidence that the people of Bangladesh were familiar with the teaching of the Buddha. Some had even traveled to assimilate Buddha's teaching at his feet and had returned to their region/country as enlightened disciples bringing with them the Buddha's wisdom.

Later on in Indian Buddhist history there are references to monasteries and stupas erected under various pious Buddhist kings and wealthy lay devotees.[16] Two stone edicts found near Sanchi Stupa suggest that Dharmadatta, a pious and rich lady, and Khanikanandan, a rich merchant of Pundravardhana (Bangladesh), made donations to erect an altar in the inner Sanchi Stupa in which relics of the Ven. Sariputta and Ven. Moggallana were enshrined. Both pious devotees had given money to build the famous Sanchi Gate as well.[17]

Emperor Asoka launched his Dhamma mission by sending missionary monks in different directions to visit foreign nations. Among these monks were the Ven. Sona and Ven. Uttara who were sent to Suvannabhumi to propagate the Buddha's teachings. These two monks stayed in Bangladesh during their journey according to Prof. Latifa Akanda.[18] Under the leadership of these monks Buddhism was further strengthened in Bangladesh. Did the Buddha visit Hasthigram (present name Haidgaun) for a fortnight preaching the Dhamma? More about this conjecture can be found in the *Chattagramer Itihas* (History of Chittagong), although it is published in Bengali.[19]

Impact of the Pala Dynasty

Buddhism had reached its peak by the time of the Pala dynasty. The Bengali political system, economic development, philosophy, history, civilization and arts were shaped on Buddhist principles. Bengali history and literature reached its zenith during the Bengali Pala Buddhist period.[20] This prolific period produced great Buddhist thinkers and artists who executed treasures of art and engaged in educational activity based on Buddhist culture and civilization. In 1931 the discovery of a stone slab, with a six-line Asokan Brahmi inscription, in the village of Mahasthan shows an order from Emperor Asoka to the chief minister of Pundravardhana to distribute food and money to famine-hit peasants.

Huang Tsiang, a renowned Chinese pilgrim who made a trip to India to learn Buddhism, records that the Buddha visited Bangladesh and preached the Dhamma for three months.[21]. Huang Tsiang is said to have visited Bangladesh between 638 CE and 645 CE and attests to seeing a large stupa city (Po-shi-Po or Vasu Vihara), which was built by Emperor Asoka to enshrine body relics of the Buddha.

Moreover, Huang Tsiang had seen numerous stupas in the Samatata area (Chittagong) where most Buddhists live. Chittagong used to be called Cetiyagama in Pali, Caityagrama in Sanskrit, and currently it's also referred to as Chattragram, meaning "the village of Ciatyas/ stupas or monuments built by Emperor Asoka." After Asoka several Buddhist and non-Buddhist dynasties ruled different parts of Bangladesh. Among them were the Gupta Dynasty (third to fifth century CE), the Khadga Dynasty (seventh and eighth centuries CE), the Deva Dynasty (twelfth and thirteen centuries CE), the Rata Dynasty (seventh century CE), the Pala Dynasty (eighth to twelfth centuries CE), the Chandra Dynasty (tenth and eleventh centuries CE), and the Pattikeriya Dynasty (thirteenth century CE). Historical records show that the Kadga, the Deva, the Pala and the Chandra dynasties patronized Buddhism successively for over 900 years. During this period the school of Mahayana Buddhism was introduced in Bangladesh. Consequently, Buddhism split into Vajrayana, Mantrayana, Tantrayana, Sahajayana and Kalachakrayana. Along with the Buddha, various Bodhisattva figures like Bodhisatta, Manjushri, Avalokiteshwar, and the goddess Tara were introduced.

Buddhism became a powerful religion in the whole of Bengal during the reign of the Pala Dynasty. Many Buddhist learning centres were established in Bangladesh under the patronage of Pala rulers. Trikutaka and Vasu Vihara at Mahasthangarh, Bogra, Jagaddal and Sompuri Vihara at Rajshahi, Sitakot Vihara at Dinajpur, Mainamati Salvana and Kanakstupa Vihara at Comilla, Vikrampuri and Dharmarajika Vihara at Vikrampur and Dhamrai (Dhaka), and Pandit and Chakrasala Vihara at Chittagong, were the great monasteries of learning and erudition. The banner of Buddhism was carried to Tibet and almost all parts of south-east Asian countries through these centres.

The Pala dynasty also produced many renowned teachers and philosophers: Shantarakshita and Dipankara Srigyan, professors of Glorious Nalanda University; the reputed master Atisha and Pandit Shilabhadra, Vice-Chancellors of Nalanda University; Pandit Prajnabhadra; Vikaramshila, head of the Pandit Vihara (University), Chittagong; the Ven. Chandragomin, renowned grammarian, poet and playwright; Rajshahi of Bangladesh; the Ven. Shantideva and the Ven. Sthiramati, professors of Nalanda; the Ven. Jetari; the junior, Tantric Buddhist sage, Padmasambhava; Kamalasila; and other great masters were all from Bangladesh.

Nihar Ranjan Rai in his book *Bangalir Itihas* (History of the Bangali People) points out that during the reign of King Sasanka, who patronized Hinduism, Bengali society witnessed deterioration. Elements of decadence were clearly visible everywhere in this Buddha-worshipping society. Following a period of political instability, the Pala dynasty arrived and revived Buddhist culture and society by supporting Buddhism in Bangladesh. For four centuries Buddhism enjoyed its golden era in the Vanga nation. With state support readily available, great Buddhist institutions were established, such as Nalanda, Vikramashila, Udantapuri and Somapuri. During this period, Bengali culture and society made for a rich civilization.[22] It was these great educational institutions that gave birth to what's known as the unique Bengali identity, the greatest gift the ruling Pala dynasty bestowed on Bengali society.

The Pala kings were Bengali Buddhists who followed the Dasa Raja Dhamma and ushered in a just reign according to the great Teaching. They never mistreated other religions, supporting Hinduism, Jainism and other ascetic traditions.

When the Pala dynasty fell to the Sen rule, the Hindu kings, then to Islamic rulers, the decline of Bengali culture began. Sayed Ali Ahsan wrote: "During Islamic rule, the big change came into the very yard of Bangladesh Buddhist society."[23] Buddhist cultural practices began to mingle with Islamic culture. However, although Bengalis embraced Islam, they did not give up their culture and way of life which was founded on Buddhist teachings and culture.[24]

From the thirteenth century CE Bangladesh began to see change and the decline of Buddhism.[25] Although Buddhism had been nearly ousted from Bangladesh by the Islamic rulers, it survived in Chittagong and the Chittagong Hill Tracts areas, where most Bangladeshi Buddhists live today practicing Buddhist teachings and preserving Buddhist cultural values and arts.

Sen rulers patronized Hinduism, thus Buddhism saw persecution during this period. Yet Buddhists preserved Buddhist culture and teachings against all odds – at times posing as Hindu devotees. The reason for the decline of Buddhism is manifold. There were two main conditions that caused the decline of Buddhism in this period: lack of state support and divisions among the Buddhist communities. Foreign invasions and embracing a foreign culture and faith also took its toll.[26] When a powerful nation prevails over a weaker one, the weaker is swallowed up. In submission, the weaker is forced to adopt the religion and socio-cultural values of the conquering nation as a means of survival. In the history of Bangladesh a similar pattern took place (through persecution by the Hindu rulers and invasion and conversion by the Islamic rulers). Buddhist culture eventually got mixed with Islamic and Hindu cultures.

Present State of Buddhism in Bangladesh

Out of Bangladesh's current population of 160 million, two million are Buddhists. Bangladesh is not an Islamic theocratic country, yet it is the third largest Islamic country in the world.[27] There are nine Buddhist communities who follow the school of Theravada Buddhism: the Baruas, Chakmas, Marmas, Rakhaines, Simha-Barua, Tanchangyas, Kheyangs, Chaks, and Khumis.[28] The Baruas, Rakhaines, and Simha-Barua live mainly in Barguna, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Comilla, and the Patuakhali districts.[29] Chakmas, Marmas and other communities live in the Chittagong Hill Tracks and Bandarban. In these communities, temples and monasteries flourish and have become forums for expression and for the practice of religion and learning.

Each Buddhist community lays claim to its own origin. Barua Buddhists trace theirs back to Vajji/vriji in Magadha.[30] They claim to be the descendents of the famous Licchavis who later faced persecution from militant Brahmans. Some Vajjis escaped their Hindu persecutors and settled down in the Chittagong area. Chakmas trace their origin to the Sakya clan, the Buddha's own clan. Marmas trace their origin to Arakains who settled in Burma from Magadha. Bangladesh Buddhist history reports that during the declining period of Buddhism in Bangladesh, a group of Buddhists migrated to the Chittagong area from Magadha and settled there with the help of local Buddhist rulers. Prof. Latifa Akanda summarized the history of these newly settled Buddhists accordingly: "These newly settled Buddhists were known as Barua. They constructed a Bhikkhuseema (ordination centre for monks) at Hanchantarghona of Pahartoli, Chittagong. This was popularly called as Thakurgaraj, Chittagong, Comilla and parts of Bangladesh were still carrying on the legacy of the Mahayana school of Buddhism. Though they came in direct contact with the rites and rituals of Tantric forms of Mahayana they did not surrender their original Theravada doctrines. Chittagong and the eastern part of Bangladesh came several times under the rule of Arakenese kings from the second century to fifteenth century. These Arakanese kings were followers of Theravada Buddhism. Thus Theravada Buddhism came to prevail again in the mainstream of Bangladesh largely through the Arakanese influence particularly as a result of the reformation movement pioneered by Sangharaj Saramedhaa Mahathera of Arakan in the mid-nineteenth century in Chittagong, Buddhist populated Chittagong Hill Tracts and other regions."[31]

Bhikkhu Sunandapriya, a young and active leading Buddhist monk living in Dhaka, has recently published an article in Bengali titled "Banglai Pracchanna Dharar Bauddha." In this article he has recorded some Bangladeshi communities who follow Islam and Hinduism yet their way of life indicates Buddhist cultural values in practice.[32] This is supported by Dr Ahmad Shariff in his book *Bangla, Bangali O Bangalittva*.[33] There are several such communities: Natha, Aawul, Baawul, Raawul. Neraneri, Ongraawu, Dharmakalt, Sahajiya, Rajbangshi, Kartavarja, Vaishnava, Sufi O Darbesh, and Garo. Although these Bangladeshi tribal people follow Islam, Sufism, Hinduism, and other local belief systems, their way of worship and prayers are similar to Buddhist practices. This is probably because after the Hindu persecutions and the Islamic invasion, Hinduism and Islam have been imposed on Buddhists. However, though they have embraced Hinduism and Islam, they have continued to retain their Buddhist faith and cultural practices along with an Islamic and Hindu belief system.

Jyoti Bikas Barua in his article "Buddhism in Bangladesh: Revival of Theravada" summarized how persecution of minority groups took place before and after the creation of Bangladesh: "After the creation of Pakistan the socio-political scenario of the former East Bengal now East Pakistan had undergone a radical change. During Pakistan rule persecution of minorities especially the Hindus became a semi–institutionalized process. Discrimination of minorities in employment and business, continual desecration of temples, torching of dwelling houses, kidnapping and raping of women through unprovoked communal violence were common. Buddhists were also not spared. Since the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971, the process has not ceased. Minority persecution in Bangladesh is virtually a continuation of the old policy of Pakistani rulers who ruled Bangladesh up to 1971."[34] With financial help from countries like Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran and Libya, Bangladeshi extremist Muslims mounted pressure on the government, whose indifference or collusion triggered Islamic militant groups to persecute minority groups in Bangladesh. In 1988 the government declared Islam as a state religion which led to legitimate persecution of minority groups. Jyoti Bikash Barua summarizes how the persecution of Buddhists took place in the Chittagong Hill Tracks: "In the Logong massacre in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in April 1992, hundreds of Chakma Buddhists were systematically murdered, Children were burnt alive and houses destroyed by torching & burning by the paramilitary forces. A similar incident occurred in Kawkhali in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in May 1992, where seven were killed, a hundred injured, one Buddhist monk seriously injured, a Buddhist temple attacked and thirty-seven houses looted and burnt. Due to the censorship of news by the government all the details of the pogrom were not published and these incidents had remained largely unreported to the world."[35] Despite these atrocities, the Buddhists of Bangladesh are living side by side with the Muslim majority and other communities. Buddhists of Bangladesh always considered themselves to be the progressive and educated minority. Buddhism is their principal source of strength for their survival throughout history.

Currently, Bangladesh has around a thousand Buddhist monasteries/temples and centres in south-east Bangladesh including some in the capital Dhaka. Bangladesh Supreme Sangha councils with Head Supreme Patriarchs, along with some active Buddhist organizations, take action for or on behalf of the Bangladeshi Buddhist communities and organize dynamic programs for these communities to uphold the moral and spiritual values of Buddhism. Such organizations are: the Bangladesh Buddhist Federation, Bangladesh Bauddha Samiti, Bangladesh Bauddha Kristy Pracer Sangha, Bangladesh Bauddha Juva Parisad, Bangladesh National Buddhist Youth Federation, Anoma Sanskrit Gosthi, Parvatya Bauddha Sangha, Uttar Vanga Bauddha Parisad, and Rakhain Marma Sangha. The goal of these organizations is to promote Buddhism and culture, to publish magazines, journals, books, periodicals, and pamphlets, and to organize conferences, symposiums and seminars on Buddhism.

In the early 1990s, *Uttar Vanga Bauddha Parisad* (North Bengal Buddhist Society) was founded by some leading Buddhist monks and lay Buddhists. It plays an important role in propagating Buddhism in Northern Bangladesh. In 1996 this organization founded a temple by the name Benuvan Vihar in the district of Rangpur. Jyoti Bikash Barua states: "The Buddhists of this region are neophytes. It is known that the uneducated aborigines living in this region were once followers of Buddhism. In the course of time, due to afore-mentioned socio-political and historical factors, they gradually deviated very far from Buddhism. Virtually they did little more than believe in the Buddha as Lord. Until recently there was hardly any Buddhist there. After a long time, it so happened that some educated Buddhists from Chittagong had gone to Rangpur in connection with their jobs. They realized the gravity of the situation. They took steps to reconvert these people to Buddhism and ordained about fifty aboriginal people as Bhikkhus and Samaneras. Being a minority, the Buddhist community has exploited avenues of progress and is said to be enlightened and versed in different walks of life, earning respect and reputation as a distinct and peace-loving community. Nowadays, you see among them scores of distinguished doctors, engineers, journalists, professors, school and college teachers, lawyers, businessmen, government high officials, ministers, politicians and the like. It is noteworthy that Buddhist parents place great emphasis on learning and education.

Although at one time Bangladeshi Buddhists had followed the schools of Mahayana and Vajrayana promoted by the Pala kings, today they follow mostly the Theravada Buddhist tradition. They observe various cultural and religious programs and festivals. In both urban and rural areas, Buddhists go to their temples daily to pay homage to the Buddha and to meditate under the guidance of monks and meditation teachers. They also observe the Purnima ceremonies four times a month including the full-moon day by observing higher precepts. Every year Buddhist monks observe Vassavasa, and a three-month rain retreat at the end of which they organize a Kathina ceremony in every temple in Bangladesh. Buddhists celebrate Vesak to mark the birth, enlightenment and passing away of the Buddha. Vesak day is a public holiday in Bangladesh. A sacred altar with Buddha statues or pictures along with some pictures of prominent Buddhists monks - i.e. Bana Bhante, the forest monks who are deemed as living Arahant monks - can be seen in every Buddhist house.

After the liberation struggle Bangladesh remained a secular state, but became an Islamic state in 1988. Yet the Bangladesh constitution reserved the rights of minorities to practice their own religion and cultural values. The Bangladesh government has established a Buddhist Religious Welfare Trust for Bangladeshi Buddhists, and Bangladesh state TV and radio broadcast Holy Scriptures from the Tripitaka twice a week. These are read by Bangladeshi Buddhist monks chosen by the Bangladesh government. Bangladeshi newspapers publish articles on Buddhism from time to time. Government schools, colleges and universities offer Buddhist and Pali studies. People can undertake Buddhist and Pali studies up to PHD at Dhaka and Chittagong universities. In addition there are also seventy Pali *Tols* where Samaneras and Bhikkhus, and lay Buddhists, can acquire knowledge of the Tripitaka. However, these need improvement.

Future State of Buddhism

Happily, the light of Buddhism in Bangladesh, though a flicker, has never been extinguished completely.. Bangladeshi Buddhists still uphold their religion with implicit devotion. The Buddhist way of life, practice and culture have been preserved within Bangladeshi Buddhist communities but will continue to be sustained in Bangladesh only with a strong leadership of able and competent Buddhist monks supported by the lay community.

On the negative side, there is an alarming increase of factionalism among the monastic congregations and among the lay community. Foreign invaders were able to easily crush divided Buddhist communities causing the religion to nearly disappear from India. Buddhism, struggling to survive in this Islamic dominant country, demands that its monks and devotees unite in solidarity for the greater good of the society.

Buddhist canonical texts, the Tripitaka, have not yet been fully translated into Bengali, so Buddhist monks and the lay community cannot learn the Dhamma in depth. Scholar-monks and lay devotees should be encouraged to address this shortcoming in the years to come. However, this enormous task needs to be funded by the government or benevolent organizations abroad. There is also a need to have well-equipped Buddhist monastic training schools, colleges and centres of learning where Bangladeshi novices and ordained monks could receive monastic education along with appropriate secular subjects. Currently, Bangladeshi monks go abroad to receive training and education. Some return to the country, but the majority chooses to remain abroad for economic reasons and privileges lacking in Bangladesh.

As incidents of Islamic extremist fundamentalism in Bangladesh increase, Bangladeshi Buddhists need foreign support, particularly from Buddhist nations, in their struggle to forge a distinct identity and win freedom to practice their religion without hindrance. When racially or religiously motivated atrocities take place against Buddhists in Buddhist villages there's no voice to bring pressure to bear on the authorities. Buddhists in Bangladesh need to be economically, socially and politically strong and should be able to count on neighboring Buddhists states or international Buddhist welfare organizations to ensure the Buddhist presence in Bangladesh continues.

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ESSAY 7

Buddhism in Bhutan

Manjiri Bhalerao

Introduction

Bhutan is a small country sandwiched between India and Nepal. The name Bhutan has been endowed by foreigners to this beautiful land, for the indigenous population calls it Druk-Yul, the "Land of the Thunder Dragon". The country is well-known today for the preservation of its rich heritage and natural beauty. Furthermore, Bhutan was considered the happiest country in Asia according to a 2006 survey. The country was ruled by an absolute monarchy until 1999 when a constitutional monarchy was adopted by King Jigme Singye Wangchuk. Then in 2008, Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuk became the youngest monarch and the head of one of the world's youngest democracies. Although Bhutan has an extensive history, the most reliable sources for its unravelling are found in the numerous texts preserved for hundreds of years in various monasteries and temples (1). The most difficult task is to separate the truth from legend. The numerous events of the past are so wrapped up in the legends of the heroes, deities, and even mountains, that it is almost impossible to retrieve the real truth. The legendary tradition is so popular in the country that it is revered as history by the Bhutanese.

In this essay the history of the country will be explained and the development of Buddhism throughout the history will be narrated in brief. In addition, the different places of worship, a number of eminent religious figures, and religious architecture and art, will be reviewed. Despite various reforms the current state of the nation is predominantly religious. The impact of Buddhism on the day-to-day life of the Bhutanese is explicit and is also reflected in their current political ideologies.

Early History of Bhutan and the Beginning of Buddhism

The archaeological evidence of the habitation of Bhutan dates back to circa 2,000 BCE. Until the introduction of Buddhism the Bhutanese were following a primitive form of religion called Bon, originally a Tibetan religion. Involving some practices similar to the aboriginal animistic cults, this folk religion was dominant in Bhutan for a long time. Even today's Bhutanese religion, a development of Mahayana Buddhism, is profoundly influenced by this folk religion.

The history of the country becomes clearer from the early seventh century CE, when the first settlers came from Tibet. Some missionaries accompanied them and the earliest Buddhist temples were established in the eastern Himalayas. In western Bhutan, Kyichu Lhakhang (*sKyer-chu lHa-Khang*) was constructed in the valley of Paro (*Spa-gro*) and Jampa Lhakhang (*Byams-pa lHa-khang*) was constructed in Bumthang, both of which represented the future Buddha Maitreya. Later, at the end of the eighth century CE, Sindhu Raja, an Indian refugee prince, established a principality in Bumthang, but was attacked by Nao–che, a king from the southern region. So Sindhu Raja requested assistance from Guru Padmasambhava who was on a mission in Tibet at the time. Guru Padmasambhava travelled to Bumthang where he was welcomed by the followers of the old sect, the Nyingmapa (*rNying-ma pa*), who called him Guru Rimpoche ("Precious Teacher"). This mission proved successful and as a result Buddhism took a firmer hold in Bhutan. During his visit, Guru Padmasambhava established many Buddhist monasteries in differing areas of the country. It was at this time that the oldest rock monasteries were founded, such as Thowada (*mThoba-Brag*) in Tang (*lTang*) in the north of Bumthang, and also Sengge Dzong (*Senge-ge rD-ong* or *Singyi Dzong*) in the north-west of the district of Kurto (*sKur-stod*) and the Tiger's Den Monastery Takshang (*sTag-tshang dGon-pa*) above Paro. The altar niche of Kuje Lhakhang (*sKu-rje lHa-khang*) in the valley of Bumthang was Guru Padmasambhava's meditation grotto. Kuje Lhakhang demonstrated the religious architecture of a temple built

Takshang Monastery

around a natural cave, a characteristic feature of Bhutanese rock monasteries. To this period is also ascribed the earliest stupa-like structures called the "eye-chortens" of eastern Bhutan. Thus Guru Padmasambhava became revered and many legends about him evolved; some of them even resembled the incidents in the life of the Buddha. Indeed, the Bhutanese regard Guru Padmasambhava as the second historical Buddha. They believe that the first Buddha, Shakya Muni, revealed the sutras and that Guru Padmasambhava revealed the tantras. The modern Bhutanese religion, developed from Mahayana Buddhism, has a pantheon of various gods and goddesses. The Buddha is the supreme lord but there are a number of Bodhisattvas, female forms such as Tara, protecting deities, and a host of fearful gods. Even some Hindu deities, especially Shiva and his consort Mahakali, have been included in the all-embracing Bhutanese pantheon.

Development of Buddhism

The introduction of Buddhism to Bhutan did not cause any serious conflict with the local religion, Bon. Buddhism absorbed the pre-historic ancestral beliefs of the people and their religious folk traditions, and many of the rites, gods and goddesses, practices and supernatural beliefs. Thus the advent of Buddhism in Bhutan was a peaceful evolutionary process, which ushered the dawn of a spiritual and historical consciousness.

The Buddhism that evolved in Bhutan was the Mahayana tantric form. It accepted the doctrine of Kalachakra - a belief in Karma - salvation by successive rebirths, and the attainment of nirvana. Lamaism, which developed in Tibet in the early eleventh century CE, was introduced to Bhutan at a later date. With this, Buddhism evolved as a system of mythology, mysticism and magic, and the worship of incarnate lamas and canonized saints became a fundamental practice of Bhutan's Buddhists.

Guru Padmasambhava's impact on Bhutan was such that almost all Bhutanese religious, and ethical and historical traditions, emanate from him. It is clear that in the preceding two centuries Buddhism had gained considerable adherents in the country. Guru Padmasambhava gave a distinct and authoritative image of the dharma, and exhibited his miraculous powers. It is believed that he subdued the local demons and evil spirits with his vajra (thunderbolt), laid the foundations of the first community of lamas, and firmly established the Mahayana form of Buddhism, deeply imbued with tantric practices. The popularity of the Nyingmapa sect was the result of Guru Padmasambhava's role in the spread of the religion in the country. Similarly, the other sects of Buddhism that were prevalent in Tibet soon arrived in Bhutan. The adherents of the sects of Sakyapa (*Sa-skya-pa*), Kagyupa (*bKah-rgyud-pa*), and Dukpa (*hBrug-pa*) also arrived soon afterwards. Finally Dukpa, a branch of Kagyupa, became Bhutan's state religion. Here is a brief account of the evolution of the major schools in Bhutan:

Nyingmapa

The sect, meaning "ancient", was also known as the Red Hat Sect. Adherents, as the common title suggests, wore red hats and traced their origin to the teachings of Guru Padmasambhava, who had established the Samye monastery in Bhutan. The Nyingmapa had characteristic forms of meditation based on the practice of yoga for the realization of the divine illumination inherent in humans. They had also a predilection towards tantricism, supernatural powers and magical rites.

Drukpa Kargyupa

The Drukpa Kargyupa (*Brug-pa bKa-brGyud-pa*) is the official lineage of Buddhism in Bhutan today. According to *Kargue Ser Threng* ("A Golden Rosary of Lives of Eminent Gurus"), the numerous Drukpa Kargyupa transmissions passed through Lingrepa Pema Dorji (*Gling-ras-pa Padma-rdo-rje*) (1128-1188 CE) to Tsangpa Jarey Yeshey Dorji (*Gtsang-pa Rgya-ras Ye-shes-rdo-rje*) (1161-1211 CE). The Drukpa sect takes its name from the convent of Gnam Drug (*Gnam 'Brug*) founded by Tsangpa Jarey Yeshey Dorji. The most important of the teachings peculiar to the Drukpa centre around the Ronyom Kordrug (*Ro snyoms skor drug*), a Terma (gter-ma) teaching concealed by Raschung and rediscovered by Tsanpa Jarey, whose productive systems of precepts was the Tendrel (*Rten-'brel*), an esoteric presentation of the *pratityasamutpada*. The chief monasteries in Tibet of Tsanpa Jarey were passed to his nephew Sangye Yonre Dharma Singye (*Sangs-rgyas Dhon-ras Dar-ma-sengge*) (1177-1237-8 CE). It was his sudent, Phajo Drugom Shigpo (*Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-shig-po*), who first introduced the teachings of Tsanpa Jarey into Bhutan. In the seventeenth century Zhabs-drung Ngawang Nyamgyal (1594–1651 CE) unified the whole of Bhutan under this sect, created a distinctly Bhutanese cultural identity, and gave Bhutan the dual system of government under the code *Tsa Yig*.

Sakyapa

Apart from the ruling Drukpa sect, the only sect that could survive and flourish in Bhutan was the Sakyapa, which consisted of the last people to arrive in Bhutan. In fact they had dominated Tibetan Buddhism in the thirteenth and fourteenth century CE. Zhabs-drung Ngawang Nyamgyal had very friendly relations with the lamas of this school, which is why peaceful co- existence between the Sakyapa and the Drukpa became possible.

The Important Buddhist Monasteries in Bhutan

Of the Buddhist monuments in Bhutan, two are the most ancient temples - sKyer-chu-lHa-khang in Paro valley and Byamspa'I lHa-khang in the Bumthang province. These temples conform to the character of the oldest Tibetan temples and demonstrate an elaborate system of construction devised by King Srongbtsan sGam-po, who ruled Tibet from c. 627 to 649 CE:

sKyer-chu-lHa-khang

This temple is located near the highest end of the sPa-gro valley in the hamlet of the same name. It lies some distance from the east bank of the sPa-chu river, which flows down the middle of the valley, roughly halfway between the two fortresses (*rDongz*) of Rin-spungs and 'Brug-rgyal. The compact single-storeyed temple lies among paddy fields. Even though the temple is supposed be very old, local traditions claim that the present building and its contents are not the original structure attributed to Srong-btsan sGam-po, but are of later construction. Scholars believe that as the main shrine is still very small and subsidiary temples have been added, it can be assumed that the dimensions of the original building were preserved throughout later restoration. Certainly the fact that generations of saints and pilgrims have visited this temple indicates its antiquity. Also the "text-discoverers" of the Bon religion and Buddhism have visited the site for a variety of reasons. The main sanctum contains a beautiful south-facing image of the Crowned Buddha known as *sKyer-chu Jo-bo*, surrounded by standing images of Bodhisattvas, locally considered equal to the famous *lHa-sa Jo-bo*.

Byamspa'I lHa-khang

This is a temple of Byas-pa (Maitreya) in Bumthang that is quite similar to sKyer-chu-lHa-khang. It is located on the floor of the upper part of the Choskhor Valley quite close to the west bank of the south-flowing Bumthang river, about two miles north of Bya-dkar rDongz, close to the mountainside. Again, over time a number of other shrines have been added to the main temple. However, the outward similarity between these two shrines is not matched by the interiors. The main image, which faces east, is of Byamspa'I lHa-khang, the Future Buddha Maitreya. On the basis of the local traditions and the classical location of this temple, it is considered as the Byamspa'I lHa-khang of Srong-btsan sGam-po.

These are the most important centers of worship in Bhutan. But there are numerous others.

Eminent Religious Figures of Bhutan Guru Padmasambhava or Guru Rimpoche

Guru Padmasambhava ("Lotus Born") was born in Uddiyana (Swat region, modern Pakistan). He is credited for taking Buddhism to Tibet and then to Bhutan and neighbouring countries around the eighth century CE. In those countries he is better-known as Guru Rimpoche ("Precious Guru"). The followers of the Nyingmapa sect consider him as the second Buddha. He came to Bhutan in c. 747 CE at the request of a Sindhu king. With his visit the position of Buddhism strengthened in the country. He is associated with the construction of Paro Taktsang (*spa phro stag tshang/spa gro stag tshang*), which is the popular name of Taktsang Palphug monastery, also known as the "Tiger's Nest". It is located on a sheer cliff face 500m above the floor of the upper Paro valley. It was built around the Taktsang Senge Samdup (*stag tshang seng ge bsam grub*) cave where he is said to have meditated in the eighth century. Guru Padmasambhava possessed the Siddhi of being able to manifest in many places simultaneously, which was in accordance with the Dharma. However, in appearing in such a manner to give assistance he took into consideration the disposition of the people in each place.

Thus he is supposed to have manifested himself in eight forms, including his own form, Padmasambhava. The first was when Guru Padmasambhava came to Bumthang at the invitation of the Sindhu Raja and restored the power of the king by conquering the local spirits. Next, he went to Paro as "Dorje Trolo". This time his appearance assumed a wrathful form in order to combat the evil psychic forces then centred on Tibet and the Himalayas, thus hindering the spread of the message of the Buddha. His manifestation as Dorje Tolo is especially associated with the Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) monastery in Paro. It is believed that he, in his all-pervading wisdom, hid spiritual texts and objects located in special places in the rocks at the Taktsang monastery to be discovered and put to use at the appointed time by a predestined person. Thus Guru Padmasambhava is venerated throughout the country and is depicted at almost every temple holding the *khatwang* (a staff topped by three skulls one upon the other), crowned by a *trishula* (a trident) in his left hand. He is shown holding a *vajra* (thunderbolt) in his right hand.

Phajo Drugom Shigpo

Phajo Drugom Shigpo (*Pha-jo 'Brug-sgom-shig-po*) was a Tibetan monk credited with the early spread of the Drukpa School in Bhutan. He was the first person to introduce the teachings of Tsangpa Jarey, the founder of this school, to Bhutan. It is believed that Tsangpa Jarey had predicted the coming of Phajo Drugom Shigpo and had instructed his successor and nephew, Sangye Yonre (*Sansrgyas Dbon-ras*), to send him to the southern valley of Bhutan to where Guru Padmasambhava had travelled. Hence, in 1224 CE, when he was forty-years-old, he went to Bhutan. After performing some miracles and impressing the local people, he meditated at Paro Taktsang. While meditating, he was told by Guru Padmasambhava to travel throughout the country and meditate at twelve particular places. Phajo began to spread the teachings of the Drukpa lineage systematically, established them as the main school in western Bhutan and exerted considerable political and spiritual influence in the rest of the country. He passed the teachings to his sons and sent them to different areas before his death in 1251 at the age of sixty-eight.

Zhabdung Ngawang Namgyal

Zhabdung Ngawang Namgyal (*Zhabs-drung Ngag-dbang rNamrgyal*) was Buddhist monk who, according to tradition, entered Bhutan from Tibet in 1616 and devoted all his energy and talents to his new homeland. He came from Duk Sangga Choling (*hBbrug gSang-sngags Chos-gling*),

a Drukpa monastery in the south of Tibet, and was accompanied by a few hundred of his adherents who were mighty knights as well as monks. He is said to have entered Bhutan from the north-west over the Lingzhi Pass (*gLing-bzhi la*) from where he proceeded to the mountains bordering Thimphu valley. He amalgamated the Four Southern Mon Districts (*lHo-mon kha-bzhi*) to build a homeland for his religious school, its followers, and supporters. By bringing this region under his control he became the first spiritual as well as secular ruler of Bhutan. Bearing the title Zhabdung (*Zhabs-drung*), he introduced the spiritual line of the Zhabdung Dynasty of Dukyul, the "Dragon Country" to which he gave the name of his religious school.

Zhabdung Ngawang Namgyal consolidated the Dragon Country and protected it from invading Tibetan troops. His establishment as a powerful ruler made the position of the earlier authoritative Lamas somewhat insecure. These Lamas belonged to different sects and had settled in Mon. But slowly and gradually, under the guidance of Zhabdung Ngawang Namgyal, they became one with the state religion. It is believed he took nearly thirty-five years to consolidate his temporal as well as spiritual power. He was continuously involved in warfare and the consolidation of his power and seems to have constructed numerous colossal forts, temples and religious monuments. Later on they became the symbols of Bhutan, which is why he is considered the first architect of Bhutan. The practice of constructing *dzongs* (fortresses combined with monastries) gained momentum under his rule and he gave a larger dimension and new ideology to the dzong system. He knew how to bring his ideas into reality and used to inspire the architects and workmen to construct the edifices according to his plan. He could actually visualize them growing out of the rocks, dominating the valleys and guarding the entrances to the country.

Zhabdung Ngawang Namgyal represented the twofold power in one person, being the ruler in both the religious as well as secular spheres (*Chos-srid-gynis-ldan*). This dual system of administration continued until 1907, the establishment of the hereditary monarchy. During his lifetime it was decided that his boundless energies would be incarnated in a threefold way (*thugs-gsung-sku*): the incarnation of his word, the incarnation of his mind, and the incarnation of his body, the latter becoming the next Dharma Raja.

Zhabdung Ngawang Namgyal is very popular in Bhutan and known as Zhabdung Rimpoche, "The precious jewel at whose feet one submits". He brought peace, security and stability to the country by establishing a strong and dynamic administrative system and by codifying a set of strict but fair laws based on the Buddhist tradition of such enduring value that they have formed the framework for the present judicial system of Bhutan. His images can be seen in every temple of the country, displayed with honour and respect. These images, both in paintings and sculpture, are masterpieces of iconographical art. He is generally shown seated in the meditation pose, cross-legged and with his hands showing the different gestures of meditation. His long, pointed black beard is generally shown reaching to his waist, while his blue-black hair is shoulder-length.

Drukpa Kunley (1455-1529 CE)

Drukpa Kunley is one of the strangest religious and historical characters of Bhutan, known by different names such as Drukpa Kunleg and Kunga Legpa, the latter meaning "The Divine Madman of the Dragon Lineage". Born into the noble Gya clan of Ralung in the Tsang region of western Tibet in 1455 CE, he was a great poet and master of the Mahamudra in the Buddhist tradition. Associated with numerous legends, he was famous for his bizarre methods of enlightening people, especially women. He used to perform miracles and then appeal to the people to be honest and lead a spiritual life. He lived in an unorthodox way and despised accepted norms of behavior to expose the hypocrisy of the world, selfish motives, and greed. He led an unrefined lifestyle that would be considered immoral according to public standards. He used to sing, drink with young ladies and have sex with them. He was also known for drinking *chung* (a Tibetan beer). He disliked hypocrites and used to mock the establishments and priests that led dual lives. He became very popular as he used to destroy evil spirits and promote fertility. He is remembered in the form of the phallic worship that is so evident in Bhutan even today. Houses and monasteries are painted with huge phalluses. Plastic, wooden or ivory phalluses are used to give blessings to the devotees. Legends relate that the paintings on which he urinated took on a gold shine because of his powers. There is hardly any dzong where he is not depicted. In fact he is considered as a Bodhisattva and is generally depicted with his right hand close to his ears, the classical posture of teaching through songs. There is a very striking image of Drukpa Kunley in Tango monastery where he is shown playing a *dramyen*, the traditional lute. The monastery claims that one of the paintings in their possession was urinated upon by Drukpa Kunley. Thus he is still a part of the spiritual life of the Bhutanese people and is remembered on all important religious occasions.

Buddhist Architecture

Dzongs

Dzongs dominate the secular and temporal life of Bhutan. Without them the life of the people would be incomplete. They are integrated in the history of Bhutan.

As mentioned, the word dzong literally means "fortress". However, dzongs combine the functions of an administrative centre and a monastery, and in the distant past were the citadels of defense against any attack. That is why they are located at all strategic points, particularly in valleys prone to outside attack. Today, the major dzongs are the seats of district administration.

The system of building dzongs is Tibetan in origin and was introduced in Bhutan by Gyalwa Lhanampa, a Tibetan monk who came to Bhutan in 1153 CE from Desung. But soon after this the system transformed itself into its dual-function role and adapted itself to Bhutan's social-political requirements. Thus the earlier dzongs were constructed by various lamas, who came to Bhutan before Zhabdrung Ngwang Namgyal. After his arrival the dzong system received a new dimension and the older dzongs became archaic and incommodious for temporal and religious purposes.

Most of the important dzongs were built according to a common plan. The selected site was always a commanding one and was generally located on a ridge overlooking the roads entering a valley. Their primary objective was defense. As the high ridges posed the problem of water supply, underground tunnels were created to connect the inhabitants with the river. As the dzongs acted as protecting monuments, some of them were also provided with towers. Even though the architecture of the Tibetan and the Bhutanese dzongs resemble each other, there is much difference in matters of detail.

The dzongs in Bhutan are massive and possess much grandeur. They are mostly located on a mountain spur that usually overlooks a valley, rising steeply on three sides. Situated at the top of the hillside are the watch-towers and observation posts. Dzong walls are made of a mixture of sand and clay bricks, while the foundation is of stone. The wooden beams are arranged in a skillful manner to fit each other.

The Bhutanese dzongs gradually became the strongholds of powerful governors called Penlops, from which they controlled their respective regions. The capture of a dzong held by a Penlop by a rival inevitably meant a victory in the battle for supremacy. The entire population of a valley used to take protection in the dzongs in the event of conflict. The dzongs are usually rectangular buildings surrounding a hollow square, in the centre of which is a large tower several storeys high, surmounted by a large copper cupola. The entrance to a dzong, usually by the side of a river, is over a bridge and has a single gateway lined with iron plates. Some of the dzongs had special arrangements for times of emergency. In the dzongs at Rinchhen Pung, Paro had an underground tunnel for exit in times of siege. A covered passage leads to the source of a water supply, as can be seen in Byakar dzong. As a fortress a dzong's architectural design tends to make it not only impregnable and inaccessible, but also quite harmonious with the landscape. On the functional side, as it served both the religious and administrative centre of the region, it was enlarged over a period of time to accommodate both the monastic orders and administrative officials. It is the focal point of the social, religious and political activities of the region. Dzongs contain some of the finest statues of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. The meditative (Dhyani) Buddha Vairochana and his female companion/consort or Shakti is one of the most popular themes of Bhutanese sculpture.

Dzongs are generally designed as parallelograms, divided into several courts. The construction is mostly of beaten mud and timber, making them highly susceptible to fire. A number of them were rebuilt after catching fire but the old style was retained.

Buddhist Monasteries

Monasteries are the most common feature of Bhutan.

Besides those located in the dzongs, most of the others are located some distance from settlements or villages; indeed some of them are located at extremely remote places. The most important reason for this was isolation from the world, to avoid temptations for the monks and to provide a peaceful environment for concentration and meditation.

In the Tibetan language, a monastery is called "Gonpa", commonly known as Gompa, which means a solitary place. It is believed that initially the monasteries were located in caves and later on when the monks could amass enough money they used to build monasteries nearby.

Before a dzong or a monastery is built, the particular spot is first consecrated. The lamas congregate there and the local deity's blessings are invoked to protect the place. Prayers are offered and a few relics, placed in a copper vessel, are deposited in a hollow stone at the site.

A number of prayer flags, inscribed with pious words, charms and religious prayers, flutter picturesquely from long poles all around the monasteries. Several large and small chortens line the approaches. The prayer flags do not merely confer merit on the planter but are for the benefit of the whole countryside. The flags carry the message "Dharma to all." The last sentence on the flag is usually "Let the doctrine of the Buddha prosper." On the flags in the cremation grounds the following words are written: *Om Ma-ni Ped-me Ho-ng* ("Avalokiteshwara on the lotus"). It is believed that each of the six syllables in the sentence represents a different "lok" - heaven, hell, earth, the animal world, the ghosts' world, etc.

Chortens

Chortens or stupas are the most visible sites on the Bhutanese landscape, found on mountains, hillocks, passes, crossroads and river banks. The word chorten literally means a receptacle for offerings. They are solid structures of conical masonry and were intended to hold relics. Often known as burial mounds, chortens are built in the memory of eminent lamas and kings. They are also built to protect a place or a region against potentially dangerous evil spirits, such as at crossroads and high passes as well as landslide and accident-prone areas. In modern times they are mostly built as cenotaphs in the memory of Lord Buddha or a saint. Some of them also commemorate the visits of various saints.

According to the Bhutanese religious texts, there are eight different kinds of chortens:

a. Tashi Junge – a prayer shrine as a source of blessing
b. Janchup Chorten – Buddha's own chorten
c. Chukhor – for the spread of the religion
d. Lhabhup – representing Buddha's return to earth from heaven
e. Yendhum – for peace and tolerance in religious disputations
f. Jinlap – to make people understand their religion
g. Namgyal – to make religion respected, well-known and appreciated
h. Nyamgde – to recall the Enlightenment and Nirvana of the Buddha

The countryside of Bhutan is full of chortens. Miniature chortens of metal, wood and clay are also made. They often contain relics and are placed on the altar of the "mother" chorten. Some of these contain many small images of saints and deities and are called Tashigoman ("Glorious Chorten"). They are often built on a cart. On auspicious days, they are carried from place to place for the benefit of the common man.

Lhakhangs

The word lhakhang means "House of God". A lhakhang is generally the central part in a monastery and is separated from other buildings. But a lhakhang can also be the only building at any auspicious place. The roof is furnished with one or two ball-shaped domes, normally of gilt or copper. It has rows of prayer wheels, which are inserted approximately three feet above the level of the path. These wheels are turned by the visitor by sweeping his hands over them as he proceeds. As one enters the temple one normally finds four guardian deities (the four kings of the four directions) and the "Wheel of Life."

The walls of lhakhangs have frescoes of many deities and scenes from the Jatakas, the former births of the Buddha, are also depicted. The two-tiered altar occupies the central position, over which hangs a silk parasol. On the lower tier, offerings of water, rice, flowers and butter lamps are placed. On special occasions as many as 1,000 butter lamps are lit at the altar.

Buddhist Art

Like other countries, Bhutanese art is also predominantly religious in nature: it was not created only for aesthetic appeal. Its primary aim was to provide a support for meditation and devotion. It appears that when Buddhism reached Bhutan, Buddhist art was already in a developed form in India, the country of its origin. The religion was transmitted to Tibet and then Bhutan in its developed form accompanied by highly developed art forms as visual aids to assist in its comprehension.

The art of Bhutan is a synthesis of many threads, Indian, Nepalese, Chinese and Central Asian. Stylistically speaking, the most dominant influence is that of Nepal. This is the case not only of Bhutan but of many countries in Asia. Newari artists from the Kathmandu valley went to different parts of Tibet and elsewhere. They received patronage mainly for their expertise in different arts and crafts like metal-casting, woodcarving, sculpture-making and religious paintings. Bhutanese art has developed with a predominant Nepalese influence as the native artists and craftsmen received their training under the Nepalese and therefore maintained the Nepalese tradition.

As mentioned, the basic function of Buddhist art in Bhutan was to serve as a visual aid for understanding the complex tenets of Buddhist philosophy and religion. One of the main subjects of Bhutanese art is the mandala or the *khyilkhor*. This is basically a mystic pattern used for the purposes of initiation and meditation. It was introduced to Bhutan together with all the teachings and methods of the northern Buddhist traditions, and its complex geometrical patterns can be seen all over the country in various combinations. It is usually traced in coloured powders on a flat surface on the day preceding the rite. The method by which this is achieved and the significance of each detail are passed down in unbroken succession from master to disciple. The teachings involved are never divulged to the uninitiated, and the mandala is always expunged at the conclusion of the rite. That is why the chief masters of painting in the main state monasteries bear the designation of Khilkhyor Lobpon or the "teacher of the mandala", indicating the great mandala tradition in Bhutan.

Mandalas are also painted in the form of *thangka*s on the cloths and walls of the temples as frescos. Even though they are generally painted at the time of consecration and are necessary for performing the rites, they are not erased after the completion of the rites. They remain on a sort of permanent basis and are believed to confer blessings on the devotees. The mandalas are also notable in the wayside chortens in Bhutan that are constructed in the form of gateways. The mandalas are painted on the ceiling so that the blessings fall on all the travelers who pass underneath. Similarly, mandalas are also painted on the ceilings of temples so as to bless the devotees.

Along with the art with religious connotations executed in religious architectural complexes, Bhutanese art has another dimension. The houses of the lay people are painted with different religious symbols like the dragon or the eight auspicious signs, Tashi Tagye, or even the phallus. The divine eight signs are very popular in Bhutanese religious art in its entire form, in paintings, carvings or sculpture. These auspicious and sacred signs are closely associated with the life and teachings of the Buddha. The "Banner of Victory" symbolizes the victory of Enlightenment. The "Parasol of Authority" symbolizes the authority of the Buddha's teaching. The "Conch Shell" symbolizes the reverberating sound of Dharma. The two "Golden Fishes" symbolize resurrection, eternal life, and rebirth. They also symbolize the eye of perception, just as fish can see through muddy water. The "Lucky Net" symbolizes Brahmajala representing all the theories and philosophies regarding the universe. The "Wheel of Law" or Dharmachakra symbolizes the propagation of the Buddha's teaching. The "Vase of Immortality" symbolizes Amrita or nectar and thus the immortality of the soul. The "Lotus Flower" symbolizes the ultimate goal, namely Enlightenment.

The zenith of Bhutanese art is achieved in the religious paintings or scrolls known as thangkas. These art treasures are famous worldwide because of their great beauty, divine themes and portable size. The painting is done on a specially treated oblong piece of cotton cloth or canvas. At the bottom of this piece a rectangular piece is sewn and is known as the "door" of the thangka. This art is not the product of creative expression but is primarily an object of worship as in the centre of the painting a deity resides. As in a temple, a "door" is provided to reach the deity.

The paintings on cloth as well as on walls are the hallmark of Bhutan's culture. The Bhutanese cannot live without colour. The paintings, although they initially served as a medium of expressing religious themes, later became a part of decorative art. Generally, houses are painted with religious symbols like the dragon or the signs of Tashi-Tagye (the eight auspicious signs). Almost all traditional Bhutanese houses are also decorated with the paintings of the phallus on the walls. The phallus is considered as a very auspicious symbol in Bhutan and is associated with the legends and power of Drukpa Kunley. They are used to ward off evil spirits, thus countering their negative effects. The phallus is also an integral part of ceremonies in Bhutan. Plastic or wooden objects resembling the phallus are used by the monks or priests to give blessings to devotees. Even the monasteries and dzongs also contain such wooden phalluses. Sometimes there are also colourful flags made out of silk cloth.

Current Status of Buddhism in Bhutan

Bhutan has always been a monarchical country and the Bhutanese have continuously loved and respected their king. There was much warfare in this country until the twentieth century. British rule did not last long and the land was primarily ruled by its own people. Until half a century ago, Bhutan was almost isolated from the rest of the world. The people carried on their traditional and peaceful way of life with farming and trading as their main occupations. In 1960, Bhutan undertook social modernization by abolishing slavery and the caste system, emancipating women and enacting land reforms. In 1998, Bhutan became a democratic state after agitation by the people for the evacuation of the Nepalese people from the country. Bhutan's fourth hereditary ruler, King Jigme Singye Wangchk, voluntarily changed the monarchical system into a two-party democracy.

Mahayana Buddhism is considered as the state religion and continues to be a powerful force. According to a survey made in the 1990s, 70% of the population of Bhutan was Buddhist. In southern and south-western Bhutan there is an ethnically mixed population with a predominance of Nepalese settlers. They speak Nepali and practice Hinduism. In eastern Bhutan the majority of the people are similar to those living in Arunachal Pradesh. Even though they have been living together for many centuries, these communities have retained their distinct identity. More than 50% of the inhabitants of Bhutan are Bhutia, and are Buddhist. Although Bhutanese Buddhism has originated from Tibetan Buddhism, it differs considerably in its rituals, liturgy and monastic organization.

Buddhism is the state religion of Bhutan and has been supported financially by the government through annual subsidies to monasteries, shrines, monks, and nuns. The state supports the religion by manufacturing images of the Buddha in large number, by publishing *Kanjur* ("Collection of the Words of the Buddha") and *Tenjur* ("Collection of Commentaries") with beautiful calligraphy, and by constructing numerous chortens throughout the country. In 1989, around 1,000 monks belonged to the central monastic body in Thimphu and Punakha, and some 4,000 monks belonged to the district monastic bodies. The hierarchy was headed by the Je Khenpo, who was assisted by four *lonponor* masters, each in charge of a religious tradition, liturgy, lexicography, or logic. The Dorji Lonpon, who normally succeeded the current Je Khenpo, had religious administrators and junior monastic officials who were in charge of art, music, and similar areas. Gelugpa monks were celibate, but Nyingmapa monks could marry and have families. They were also allowed to work in secular occupations along with the performance of their liturgical functions in temples and homes. In all there were around 12,000 monks in Bhutan in the late 1980s. The nuns in Bhutan were also very active but the exact number is not clearly known. The majority of Bhutan's Buddhists are adherents of the Drukpa sub-sect of the Kargyupa ("Oral Transmission") school.

In July 2002, Menjong Chothun Tshogpa (MCT), a non–profit organization, was founded by His Holiness Trulku Jigme Choda Rinpoche, the seventieth Jekhenpo (Supreme Dharma King) of Bhutan, primarily to preserve the indigenous Buddha's teachings as their age-old culture and tradition. In June 2003, Trulku Jigme Choda Rinpoche appointed His Eminence Trizin Tsering Rinpoche as the chairman of the MCT, which has undertaken various tasks with the objective of preserving, strengthening and propagating traditional Bhutanese culture and also to keep abreast of the educational progress and developments in the world. Some of the activities include the reprinting of the Kangyur sutra collection for distribution to monasteries, assisting the aged and the needy, encouraging the appreciation and understanding of the Dharma, and eventually providing guidance towards attaining complete Buddhahood, giving support to the lay Buddhist practitioners, monks, nuns, yogis, yoginis and lay people by providing them with temples, monasteries, retreat centres, stupas and Buddha statues.

In 2004, His Eminence Trizin Tsering Rinpoche founded the Buddha Dordenma Image Foundation under the patron of His Holiness of Bhutan, with an aim to fulfill two prophecies. In the twentieth century, the renowned yogi Sonam Zangpo had prophesized that a large statue of Padmasambhava or Buddha or a *phurba* (a ritual dagger also known as *kila* in Sanskrit), which is associated with the meditational deity, would be built in this region to bestow blessings, peace and happiness on the world. The second prophecy is the statue is also mentioned in the ancient *terma* (hidden treasure) of Guru Padmasambhava.

The Bhutanese also enjoy celebrating many festivals, such as *domchoe* and *tsechu*. They are celebrated all over the country in almost all dzongs and monasteries. The most attractive and popular part of the celebrations consists of the ritual dance by the lay people and the monks, who wear colourful dresses and masks. Monks dressed as clowns, locally called *atsara*s, carry large wooden replicas of the phallus and give blessings to the people. In the villages, people have competitions consisting of sports such as archery. The *drametse ngacham* is also a very popular dance form in Bhutan, and its heritage has been recognized by UNESCO.

With the introduction of Western values and lifestyle, some of the traditional practices are now considered out of fashion by the Bhutanese. The practice of worshipping the phallus is generally discouraged by people living in urban areas. Even though the depiction and worship of the phallus is supposed to ward off evil, its depiction on the exterior of houses is being removed. It appears that devotees feel embarrassed while worshipping the wooden replicas of the phallus. The situation in the rural regions of the country is contrary and the people retain wooden phalluses on the eves of their houses and place large paintings of the decorated phalluses on the walls of their houses. The phallus is also used in monasteries and during the ritual dances in festivals to give blessings to the devotees. This phallus worship is considered as reminiscent of the pre-Buddhist Bon practices as well as the miracles performed by Drukpa Kunley. Nevertheless, it appears the Bhutanese are on the path of divesting themselves of some of these rituals that might be objected to by Westerners.

Influence of Buddhism on Bhutanese culture

Today, Bhutan has entered an era of transformation. One very important example is the concept of Gross National Happiness, developed in Bhutan in 1972 by former king Jigme Singye Wangchuk, who opened the country's doors to modernization. He made an attempt to define an indicator that measured the quality of life or social progress. The phrase "Gross National Happiness" was also used to indicate his commitment to building an economy that would serve Bhutan's unique culture based on Buddhist spiritual values. It is believed that the concept of Gross National Happiness is designed accepting the fact that the pursuit of happiness is found in all people and is the strongest of desires. Hence Gross National Happiness adopts a middle path approach in which spiritual and material pursuits are balanced. This is considered as a program for social and economic revision toward the implementation and institutionalization of the belief that development should promote happiness as its primary value. In the promotion of this scheme, equal emphasis is laid on the socio-economic development, spiritual, cultural and emotional needs of the people. Thus this scheme has a philosophical foundation for the policy-making process and its implementation in Bhutan.

The four basic fundamental tenets of Gross National Happiness are the promotion of sustainable development, preservation and promotion of cultural values, conservation of the natural environment and establishment of good governance. As a result of the implementation of this policy Bhutan has seen improvement in many key development indicators, which include per capita income, life expectancy, infant and maternal mortality rates, health coverage, school enrollment, and literacy rates.

The preservation and promotion of Bhutanese culture is another factor that is involved in the Gross National Happiness strategy. It is generally believed that a decline in traditional heritage and culture will lead to the general dissatisfaction of society. Hence it has been given a high priority by the government. Bhutanese culture and values are taught even in school.

Along with the promotion of Bhutanese culture, environmental conservation is also valued widely throughout the country as many people practice agriculture and are dependent upon natural resources. It is believed that irresponsible activities affecting the environment will lead to negative and therefore unhappy results. Hence the Bhutanese population has accepted the significance of preserving the environment for future generations and has also taken measures against severe environmental degradation.

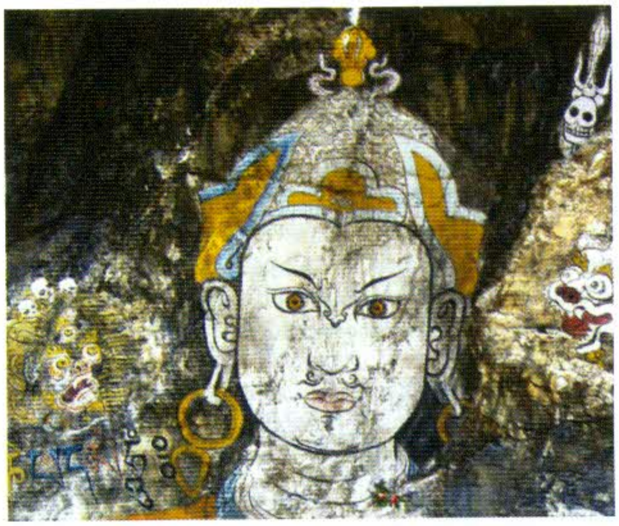
The Bhutanese government's intention to establish good governance is evident through its dedication to promote happiness and the well-being of its citizens. King Jigme Singye Wangchuck withdrew from the executive function of the government in 1998 and universal voting rights were introduced in 2002. Along with this, the king also introduced significant reforms that included the transferring of most of his administrative powers to the Council of Cabinet Ministers and even allowing his impeachment by a two-third majority in the National Assembly.

Thus the theory and practice of Gross National Happiness has helped the rulers to take the nation into the modern world but at the same time keep the cultural foundation of the country intact. With these efforts, the people in the country are enjoying the ways of the new world without leaving their glorious past behind.

Conclusion

The reforms introduced by the government have brought many changes as well as challenges in Dragon's Land. The doors of the country are now open to the winds of change. The internet and other types of media have exposed the Bhutanese to Western ideologies and beliefs. The pious people following Buddhism are also exposed to the lifestyles of people following other religions such as Christianity and also to a state of mind in which people do not believe in any religion. Some people have started converting to Christianity, most of them Nepalese settlers. They believe that Christians are better looked after by organizations in Western countries. To conquer this practice the Bhutanese parliament has proposed a bill, which has much support among the Bhutanese, against unethical conversions.

The diversity of the population of Bhutan has resulted in the robberies of the lhakhangs and chortens. Apparently the robbers are not afraid of the consequences and are only interested in selling antique objects to collectors across the borders. Another implication of these events is that some people no longer respect the traditional values of the kingdom. The general opinion of the Bhutanese is that traditional values are being lost and they should be instilled in the minds of the new generation. Hence patronage is given to the construction of new stupas, temples and monasteries by the government and the Buddhist religious texts are reprinted so that people will become acquainted with the great Buddhist heritage of Bhutan.



Note

1 There are many texts preserved in the monasteries of Bhutan but very few of them have been translated into English. The religious nature of the people and the gradual introduction of research techniques in the country have led to the absence of numerous reliable sources for the reconstruction of the history of the country. The process of extracting the historical facts from the available resources will come to fruition in the near future

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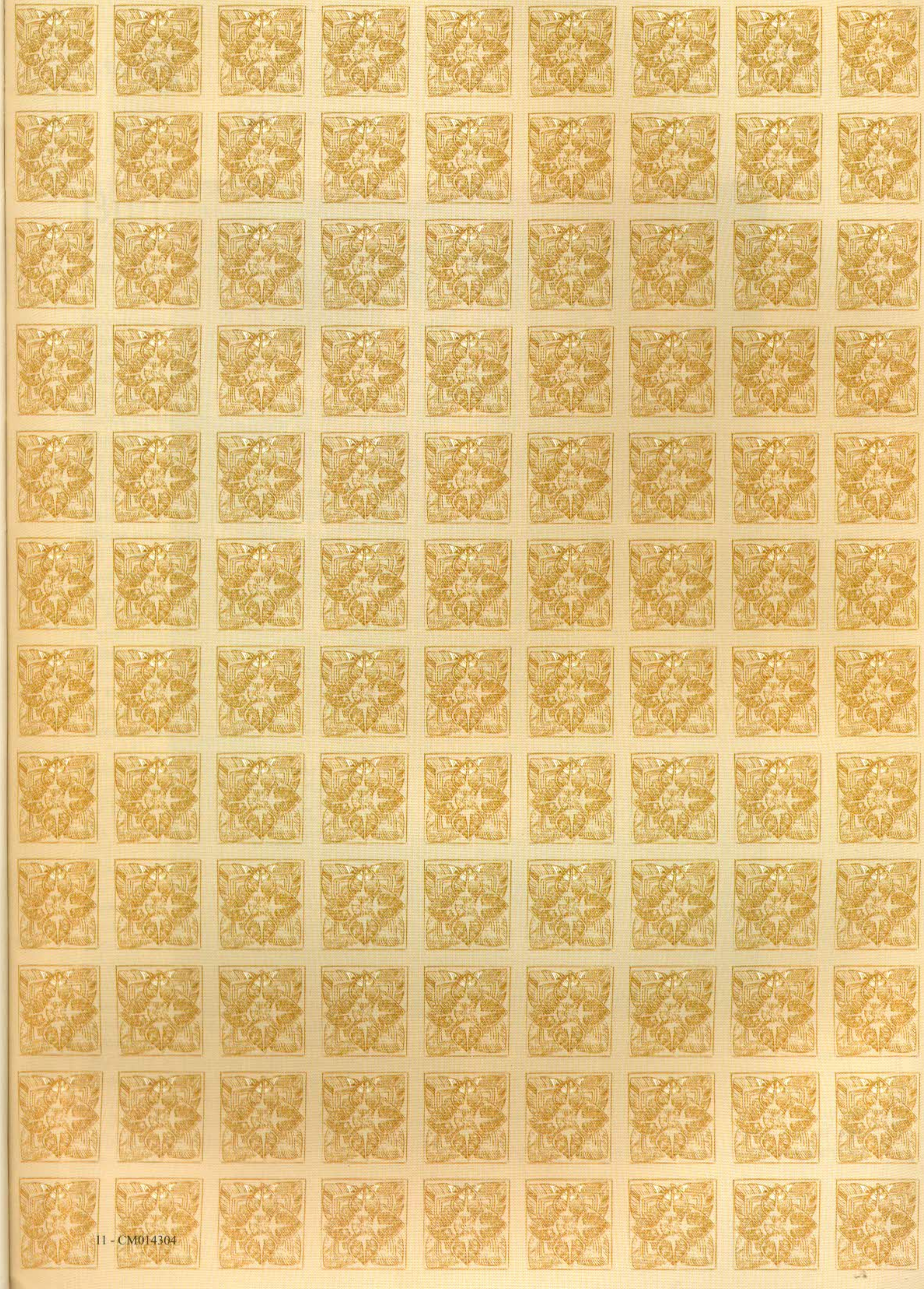

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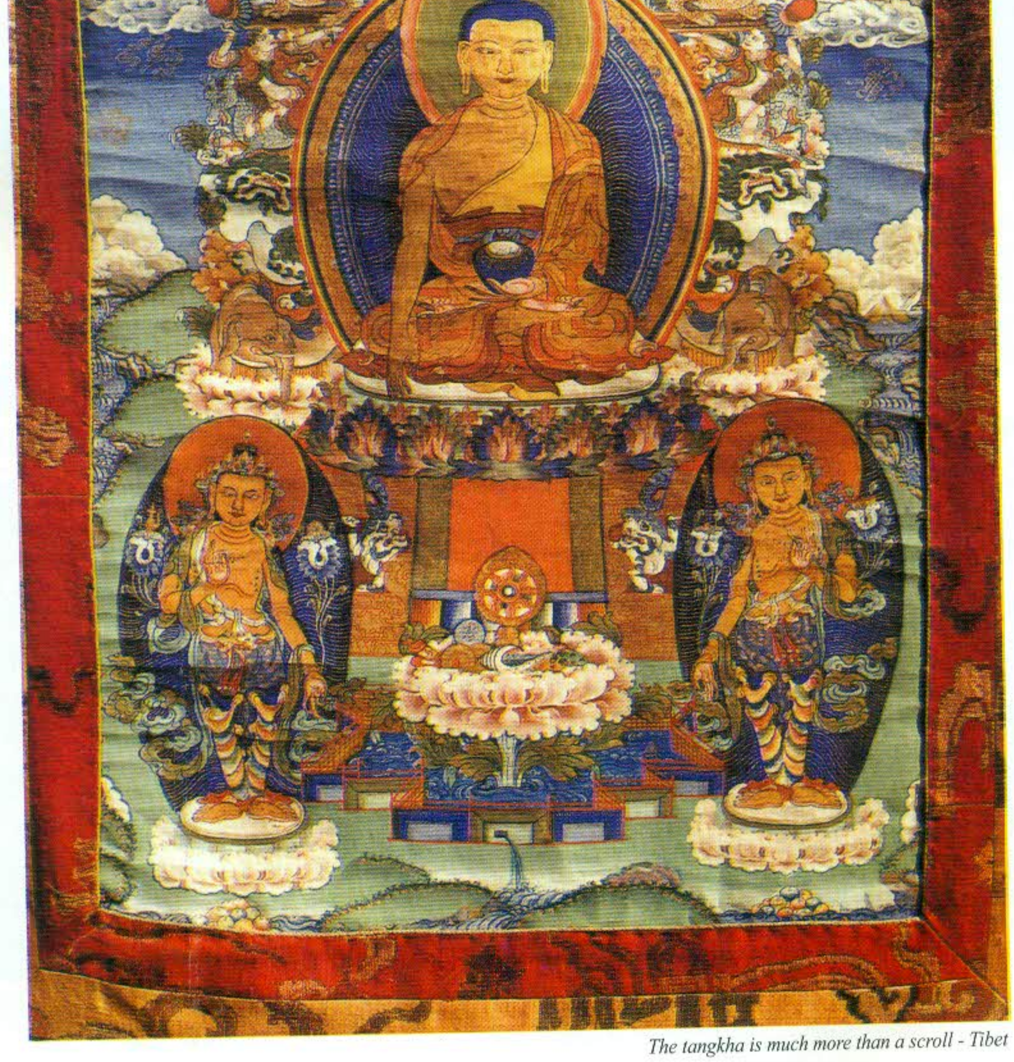


The tangkha is much more than a scroll - Tibet

ESSAY 8

Buddhism in Tibet

A Journey through Time

Geshe Ngawang Samten

Introduction

In the course of its history, Tibet has been receptive to other cultures and civilizations, such as Greece, Persia, Khotan, Turkey, China and India. The horizon was wide enough to encompass medicine, art, architecture, astrology, music, literature, philosophy, and spirituality. Concurrent with this assimilation was the enrichment of the indigenous culture. In a similar manner, there had occurred the dissemination of Tibetan culture to many other countries: southwards to all the Himalayan regions, the northern side of present-day Pakistan and northern present-day Myanmar. Eastwards, Tibetan culture spread to northern China and Manchuria; and northwards to Mongolia, Buryatia, Kalmykia and Tuva regions of Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and Dzungaria in East Turkistan.

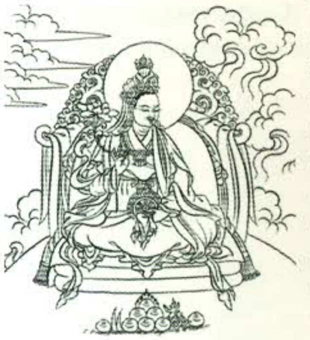
In the seventh century CE there occurred in Tibet a momentous change in its history when it decided to embrace Buddhism as the state religion. This eventually reshaped spiritual practice and thought, the system of knowledge, and other domains such as medicine, astronomy and art, and it was absorbed into the life of the common people as well.

* * *

When Tibet received Buddhism from India it encountered the overwhelmingly rich and profound knowledge system and high spiritual practice at the great monastic universities like Nalanda, Odantapuri, Vikramshila, and Takshila, the centers of spiritual attainment and practices of the highest order pursued alongside the study of Abhidharma, Sutra and Vinaya. Those learning centers, with Nalanda as the leading example, also conducted studies of various fields of wisdom that helped develop many disciplines: philosophy, logic, epistemology, psychology, medicine, astronomy, metallurgy, arts, poetry, grammar, and languages had their fields of study advanced both horizontally and vertically. These citadels of knowledge played a prominent role in the development of the Indian knowledge system in general through interaction with non-Buddhist traditions. Thus, Buddhism in India was at the peak of its development when Tibet embraced it and provided a great opportunity for the country. Consequently, Tibet became the direct heir to the entire range of Buddhist traditions and studies of other areas of enquiry prevalent in those great monastic universities.

In retrospection, we see that many fundamental and significant decisions were taken with respect to receiving Buddhism in Tibet. At the very beginning the idea of receiving Buddhism from India rather than from China - the latter was geographically more accessible, and hence would have avoided the hazardous journey through the Himalayas - enabled Tibet to a have direct access to the original sources of Buddhist thought. Had it been adopted from China the nature of Buddhism in Tibet would have been altogether different.

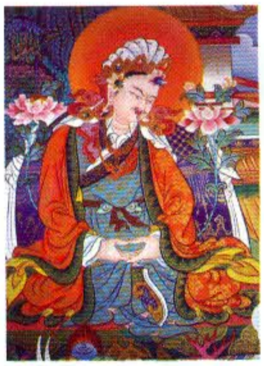
When Buddhism reached Tibet, the country was a formidable military power in central Asia, expanding its vast territory as far as the east, deep into what is today called China and to Iran in the west. Notwithstanding the escalation of power of territorial expansion and its dominance in the entire region, Tibet started accommodating its culture to the influence of Indian Buddhism and thus great transformations commenced in all spheres of life: political, social, educational and cultural.



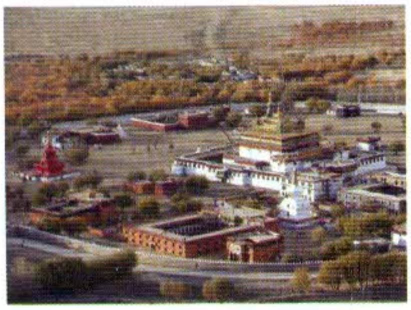
The portrait of thr Emperor Songtsan Gampo (617-649 CE)

Emperor Songtsan Gampo (617-649 CE), who is known as the first great Dharma Emperor, married princesses from Nepal and China as a strategy of maintaining political relations with the neighboring countries. Both of the princesses were devout Buddhists who brought with them precious icons of the Buddha. Two major temples, Ramoche and Jokhang, were constructed to house them. The Emperor Songtsan Gampo sent a group of brilliant students headed by his young minister to India to study at the feet of the great masters.

Thonmi Sambhot was the only student who was able to return to Tibet; while his friends succumbed to hardships on the way. He pioneered the project of translating some of the teachings of the Buddha into Tibetan. The erection of temples and statues and the translations of texts continued during the reign of the subsequent emperors as well. However, Emperor Trisong Detsen (755-797), who is known as the second great Dharma Emperor, took up the entire project of establishing Buddhism intensively on a large scale in all areas ranging from spiritual to scholarly ones, arts and medical science. In the beginning he invited Acharya Shantarakshita (725-790), the abbot of Nalanda, but on his arrival in Tibet, the emperor encountered strong resistance from the indigenous religious orthodoxy As a result the project of establishing Buddhism on a large scale had to be suspended. Acharya Shantarakshita advised Emperor Trisong Detsen to invite the great Guru Padmasambhava from India, who accept the invitation and paved the way for the further flowering of Buddhism and the construction of the Samye monastery, which had been planned earlier. Acharya Shantarakshita returned to Tibet and ordained a group of Tibetans that marked the founding of the Bhikshu Sangha in Tibet. Without such a body of ordained monastics the Buddha Dharma would not have survived until today.



The portrait of thr Emperor Trisong Detsen (755-797)



Samye monastery

Emperor Trisong Detsen reinforced the translationprocess of the Buddha's teachings and the works of the Indian masters by systematically organizing the entire enterprise. He achieved this by establishing a translation center at Samye monastery. The most venerable and celebrated Indian masters were invited from the great monasteries for the monumental work of translating the enormous corpus of literature. Conversely, Tibetan youngsters were sent to India to study in the monastic universities, while many Indians studied in Tibet. This trend continued for centuries with a break only during the disintegration of Tibet.

Under the emperor's supervision detailed guidelines were formulated and lexicons were created for an authentic translation. The translation of every work was undertaken in collaboration with an Indian master and a Tibetan *lotsawa* (translator). The translation of each work had to be approved by a supervising editorial board. The authenticity and originality of the source texts were preserved in the Tibetan version by not only maintaining the lexical and thematic meaning of the text, but also by transmitting the spirit of the text. This is the most important part of the Tibetan translation of the texts that is often missed in modern translations. It is a unique example of maintaining high standards of translation for any kind of similar work.

The decision to translate the canonical literature into Tibet's indigenous language was another major step that made the entire corpus accessible to Tibetans. This eventually proved to far excel the contribution of Tibetan scholars, creating an extensive corpus of literature, great intellectual and spiritual enterprises throughout the country, and the permeation of Buddhism into everyday life of the common people. Thus Buddhism nourished the very culture of the nation.

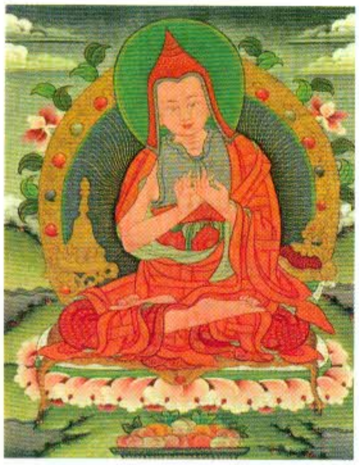
The third great Dharma Emperor, Ralpachen, extended the royal patronage to Buddhism in a similar way by deepening its impact in Tibet. When it was observed that the earlier translations required revision in order to make them more authentic, the work was undertaken by comparing various versions of the Indian texts treasured at different places, and often consulting the revisions from Bengal, Kashmir, Magadha and Gandhara.

Among the many lotsawas of this era, the most distinguished were Kawa Paltseg, Chogro Luyi Gyaltsan and Shang Yeshe-De, who made a tremendous contribution to the monumental work of translation.

While everything moved forward with enthusiasm and fervor, there suddenly appeared an ominous cloud over the horizon of Tibetan history. Emperor Ralpachen was assassinated in 838 CE, which was followed by the ascension of the late monarch's younger brother, Langdarma, who not only discontinued royal patronage but closed down the Buddhist monasteries and stopped the project of translation and other allied activities.

Langdarma in turn was assassinated in 842 CE and thereafter the Tibetan Empire disintegrated for quite some time. This turn of events not only retarded the progress of Buddhism, but also of all other aspects of Tibet as a nation.

Since the root of Buddhism was already firmly embedded in the Tibetan mind and life, the political situation, although trying, could not dissuade Tibetans from reviving the monastic way of life and other intellectual, spiritual and cultural activities. In other words, the program of acquiring Buddhism from India was resumed.



Atiśa Dīpankara Śrījñana

Descendents of the Tibetan imperial family, who had resettled in the far western region of Tibet, left no stone unturned to restore Buddhism in the country. They sent brilliant young men to India and invited Indian masters, thus continuing the earlier practice. Rinchen Sangpo, a renowned lotsawa who returned to Tibet in 988 CE as a scholar and a spiritual master, translated several texts from Sanskrit, founded major monasteries, and commissioned hundreds of stupas in the western region of the country. The king of the region succeeded in inviting the great master Dipankara Srijnana, an adept scholar and abbot of the famous Vikramashila monastic university in 1042 CE. While in Tibet he composed the text *Bodhipathapradipa* in Sanskrit that demonstrates the practice of the gradual path according to which vinaya and Mahayana, which emphasizes the cultivation of compassion and love followed by the awakening of the Bodhi-mind and in developing the view of selflessness (*anatama*), are not only not contrary to the practice of Tantra but are the mandatory foundations for the practice of Tantra which is a sophisticated high level spiritual system that demands challenging prerequisites of spiritual qualification. Due to Dipankara Srijnana and his disciple Domtonpa the school of Kadampa came into existence, which puts strong emphasis on the practice of renunciation, compassion and mind-training, and influenced all the later schools of Buddhism in Tibet. The Kadampa and the following schools are known as *Sarma,* the "New Schools", and the teachings that had prevailed earlier were known as *Nyingma.* the "Old School". Thus Buddhism in Tibet is also referred to as belonging to two eras. Buddhism until Langdarma is known as the "Earlier Dissemination", and with the revival of monasticism in central Tibet followed by the active translation work, teaching and practice in western Tibet from the late tenth century onwards is referred to as the "Later Dissemination of Buddha Dharma".

In the earlier period and at the beginning of the revival process, although the Tibetan scholars now and then composed commentarial and independent texts, they remained focused primarily on the translation work of the Buddha's teaching and treatises of the Indian masters.

In the latter half of the eleventh century there appeared one of the most influential scholars, Patsab Nyimadag, who returned after studying for twenty-four years in India and made a great contribution to the promotion of Pransangika Madhyamaka philosophy, which later became the most influential view of Tibetan Buddhist. Patsab Nyimadag, like Rinchen Sangpo, taught widely, but particularly at Sangphu and Phenpo, which were the great learning centers of the time.

Marpa Lotsawa (1002-1097), a prominent scholar and spiritually realized translator, went to India three times and studied with the adept scholars, Mahasiddha Naropa (1016-1100) and Maitripa (1007-1087) of Nalanda. Marpa Lotsawa, with the high level of intellectual knowledge of other lotsawas, returned with advanced spiritual realization and the transmission received from the masters. After his return to Tibet, Marpa translated many treatises and trained a multitude of disciples and passed on the transmission to them. One disciple, Milarepa (1028/1040-1111/1123), became the most celebrated yogi of Tibet and attained enlightenment. Marpa's lineage came to be known as the Kagyu Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, which later sub-divided into branches and sub-branches with erudite spiritual masters.

Another prominent scholar-translator of the eleventh century was Drogmi Lotsawa Shakya Yeshe (993-1074), who studied in India for several years at the feet of the adept and scholar, Mahasiddha Virupa, attaining academic and spiritual mastery. After his return he focused on the teachings and the practice of Lamdre and passed on the transmission to Khon Konchog Gyalpo (1034-1102) – who belonged to an important Khon clan of central Tibet – and later founded the Sakya monastery in the Tsang region of central Tibet.

Eventually, with further development of monasteries and erudition in studies and practices, there emerged a major tradition of Tibetan Buddhism known as the Sakya tradition, which produced many scholars. The foremost was Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (1092-1158), also known as the Sakya Pandita, who was a scholar of exceptional acumen and a great spiritual master.

Thus, by the eleventh and twelfth centuries, well before Buddhism disappeared from India, the Buddha Dharma had already established its roots in Tibet. The Tibetan scholars had already acquired maturity in academic expertise as well as in spiritual realization based on the extensive literature available in the Tibetan language and were also energized by the close interaction with the Indian masters, and also by the constant flow of adept Indian scholars and Tibetan students and scholars between India and Tibet. Hence in these two centuries there was an incredible growth and development of Tibetan culture in wide areas of intellectual achievement, art and spirituality.

The thirteenth century also passed with unabated enthusiasm. However, there was an abrupt discontinuation of the journey of the Indian masters and the Tibetan scholars between India and Tibet in the wake of the destruction of the monastic universities of India, which led to the disappearance of Buddhism from India. Many monks and senior scholars came to Tibet as refugees. The abbot of Vikramshila, Shakyashribhadra was one among them who continued composing treatises, and giving teaching and spiritual practices. Tibet was already second to India in respect of the Buddha Dharma, enfolding intensive spiritual practice and intellectual pursuits particularly in the domain of Mahayana Buddhism.

In the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there appeared in succession many great thinkers, scholars and spiritual masters who reinforced the flourishing of the Buddha Dharma. During this period consolidation of the works and literature already translated from Indian languages, mainly from Sanskrit, and further advancement in various fields of study, particularly in philosophy, through interactions among the schools on philosophical issues. Buton Rinchen Drub (1290-1364) was a multi-linguist and a spiritual master who compiled and edited the sutras, teachings of the Buddha and the *shastras*, the treatises of the Indian masters running to around 5,000 titles in 300 volumes for the first time. He authored treatises on a wide range of subjects running into twenty-eight volumes. His works, like those of many other outstanding masters in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, are studied in all the traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsan (1292-1361) founded the Jonang school with his specific interpretation of Madhyamika philosophy known as *shentong,* which was critiqued by scholars of other traditions. Bodong Chogle Namgyal (1766-1451) was a scholar of promise and an exceptionally prolific writer. He authored 137 volumes covering extensive fields. His tradition and the Jonang tradition did not continue beyond the seventeenth century. Je Tsongkapa Lobsang Dagpa (1357-1419), who studied with the Sakya scholars, particularly with Rendawa Shonu Lodo, founded the Gedenpa school, the last major school of Tibetan Buddhism. He authored eighteen volumes, making significant contribution to various fields, specifically the study of Madhyamika philosophy. This great thinker and spiritual master was followed by his direct disciples who were also adept scholars. They composed many treatises in order to enhance the understanding of the thoughts of Tsongkhapa in the manner of the philosophical view of Nagarjuna and other *Prasangika madhyamik*a masters of India. Later, through the centuries, the scholars belonging to this tradition continued to author extensive literature.

In a similar manner the followers and later scholars of other Tibetan traditions wrote treatises extensively for the clarification of the views of their respective masters as well as meeting the contemporary challenges of philosophical issues. As late as the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, Jamgon Mipham Rimpoche (1846-1912), a prominent master of Nyingmapa, the earliest Tibetan Buddhist school, who was a prolific author, wrote several treatises covering a wide range of philosophical views. This trend continued in Tibet till the end of the first half of the twentieth century.

It should not be construed that Tibet had more than one form of Buddhism as the names of the sects are often supposed to indicate. In point of fact there was and is only one form of Buddhism. What is important is that there are no sects, but different traditions based on emphasis of certain practices. As we have seen they emerged at different times following hallowed teachers. They equally emphasize the monastic system following the Mulasarvastivada Vinaya, which is one of the three existing vinaya traditions of ancient Indian Buddhist monasticism. The other two are the Theravada tradition, which is prevalent in the South Asian countries, where Pali tradition is in vogue, and the Dharmagauptika tradition, which is practiced in the countries where Chinese Buddhism is in vogue. The Tibetan traditions subscribe to the Madhyamika philosophical view along with the study of other philosophical schools of Buddhism: Vijnanavada, Sautrantika and Vaibhasika as presented in the wide range of treatises of Indian and Tibetan masters. They also study other disciplines like logic, epistemology, Buddhist spiritual system, language, grammar, poetry, medicine, astronomy, and the arts. The study of Vinaya, Sutra and Abhidharma and practice of Shila, Samadhi and Prajna are the core activities of the monasteries. The study of Tantra is allowed for the advanced students who are capable of going through the complex system of the four schools of Tantra. Sometimes misconception about Tantra is seen among those who are not familiar with the system. This tradition, which came from the hallowed masters of those great Indian monastic universities, is a part of the living tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. It is certainly a high level spiritual practice. The foundation of the Tantric system is the philosophical view of emptiness and dependent arising and practice of Bodhicitta. Many of the scholars belonging to a particular tradition are proficient in other traditions as well because students of one tradition study at the monasteries of other traditions.

Thus the Tibetan schools of various traditions remained vibrant and active in intellectual and spiritual pursuits without interruption throughout the history of Tibetan Buddhism. They maintained the tradition of Nalanda and other Indian monastic universities, together with the high ideals of spiritual practice associated with active engagement in intellectual exercises. These endeavors extended the frontiers of studies and research. Tibetans preserved the intellectual and spiritual culture of the great Indian monastic universities as a highly treasured legacy. Thus it would be true to say that the texts were translated, the tradition was transmitted and the entire academic and spiritual culture of Nalanda and other great Buddhist learning centers were virtually transplanted to Tibet and grew there dynamically.

A plethora of monasteries were established throughout Tibet where monasticism and spiritual practice were the prime activities along with study and training for the younger students. Scholastic exercises generated a multitude of scholars and spiritual masters. Thereby tens of thousands of treatises were authored pertaining to meditational methods, spiritual realization, philosophy, logic, epistemology and the Buddhist system with the foundation of Vinaya, Sutra and Abhidharma and other fields of studies like literature, medicine, astronomy, grammar, poetry, and the arts. The mountains and caves were occupied by the meditators, who, avoiding social life, engaged in intensive meditation practiced exclusively for the accomplishment of spiritual attainment. Constructed in vast numbers in the valleys, the stupas and temples served the spiritual purpose of the masses, thus reflecting the popularity of Buddhism in Tibet, the roof of the world. By the end of the first half of the twentieth century there were more than 6,000 monasteries and temples all over Tibet.

When the glory of spiritual realization and scholarly expertise of Tibetan masters reached its heights, they attracted the attention of the neighboring countries. Starting from the twelfth century the emperors of China sought spiritual guidance and solicited the Tibetan masters belonging to the Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug to be the national preceptors or imperial preceptors and to give teachings in their courts. Tibetan Buddhism remained extremely popular in China both at the imperial and general popular level. Often Tibetan masters declined such requests and sometimes they sent their disciples instead. This trend remained throughout the dynasties of China, Yuan, Ming and Manchu until 1911, with some interruptions during the occasional fall of the dynasties in China.

The relationship between Tibetan spiritual masters and Mongolian kings was different in that it was not confined to the spiritual domain: political interference of the Tibetans from time to time became a singular feature. The impact of Tibetan Buddhism on Mongolia and its culture is so overwhelming that the entire culture of religion, monasticism and academics became transformed to the pattern of the Tibetan culture. Other regions in Russia such as Buriyat, Kalmyk, Tuva, and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Dzungaria in East Turkistan, bear a similar impact of Tibetan Buddhism. The teaching corpus of the Buddha and the works of the Indian masters had been translated into the Mongolian language with the help of Tibetan scholars. The Tibetan language had been the *lingua franca* for the Buddhist studies and practices in the monasteries. Mongolian students studied in the Tibetan monasteries and many Mongolian scholars made contributions to various fields through their participation in authoring scholarly works in the Tibetan language.

Since early times the regions in Nepal, the Indian Himalayan region, and Bhutan have been part of the development of Buddhism in Tibet and their religious and cultural tradition is still maintained according to Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

After the Chinese invasion of Tibet, which started in 1949 and culminated in 1959 with total occupation, around 6,000 monasteries and temples were destroyed particularly during the so-called Cultural Revolution. Only around 250 remained and religious practice was banned in Tibet. Millions of books in the libraries and monasteries were burned under the systematic plan to erase the identity of Tibetan culture rooted to Buddhism.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama had to leave the country, the only option left to him, and he sought political asylum in India with which Tibet had profound relations for thousands of years. Following him, many Tibetans, including spiritual masters and eminent scholars, fled to India. The greatest concern and challenge to the Tibetans was the preservation of the unique culture of Tibet, for which the country invested its entire effort to bring Buddhism from India and preserve and nurture it thereafter.

Under the dynamic leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual masters and intellectuals worked tirelessly to preserve their culture by re-

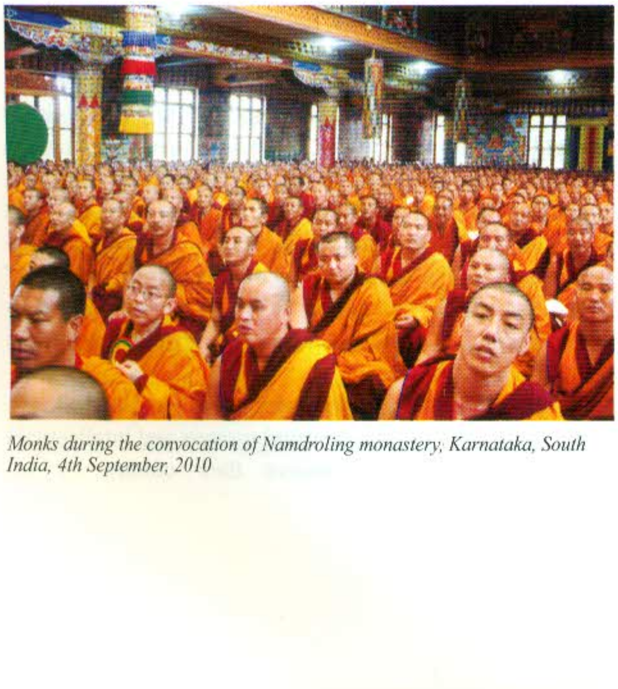
Tibetan Buddhist scriptures in Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharmasala, India

establishing many of their monasteries and opening new institutes and thereby maintaining their tradition with the teaching and practice of the Buddhism in India, Nepal and Bhutan. They established more than 250 monasteries in these regions. They have been extremely successful, although not comparable to what they achieved in Tibet, in resuming their academic, spiritual and other cultural activities in the manner they had been used to for more than a millennia. The presence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan masters belonging to all traditions had a strong impact in many ways. They brought back to India the ancient Indian tradition after nearly 1,000 years. They attracted foreign scholars, students and common people from the early 1960s, both from those countries where Mahayana Buddhism has been a part of their culture but interrupted due to communist rule, like Mongolia and the states in Russia, and from those countries where the Mahayana tradition is an uninterrupted living tradition like Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Many students and scholars from Western countries came to study with them, who later became instrumental in the flourishing of Buddhism, particularly Tibetan Buddhism, in the West. Many of the Tibetan spiritual masters and scholars were invited to Asian and Western countries to teach and give spiritual guidance. They later established many institutions, monasteries and centers in these countries.

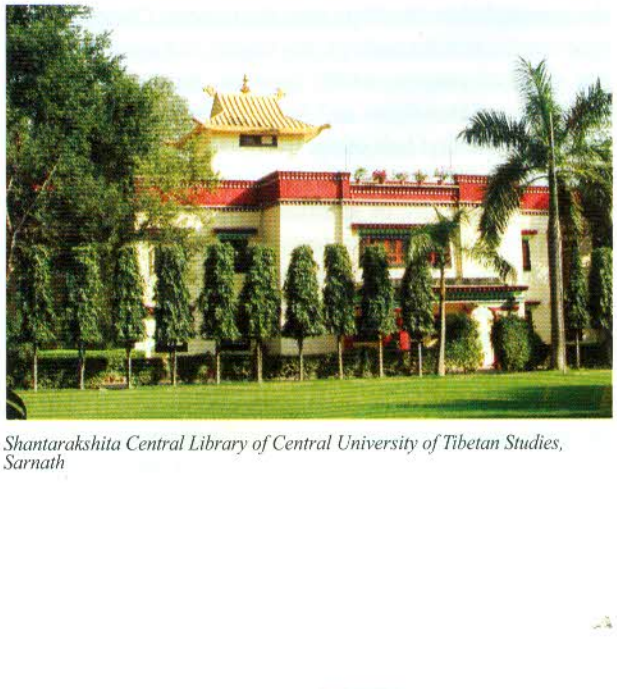
His Holiness the Dalai Lama envisaged establishing an institute of higher Tibetan studies in India in the early 1960s to provide an opportunity for the students from Tibet and the Indian Himalayan region to pursue their study that had to be discontinued study due to events in Tibet. After discussion with Pundit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, the Indian government established an institute in 1967, the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Varanasi, initially as a special wing of the Sampurnananda Sanskrit University, Varanasi, which eventually became a university and is now called the Central University of Tibetan Studies. With progressive development, it is a well-known premier institute known for its contribution to research and teachings, particularly for its restoration of lost Buddhist texts translated into Sanskrit from the Tibetan language, translation of works of Indian and Tibetan Buddhist masters into Hindi and other languages from Tibetan sources, research on rare Buddhist manuscripts, compilation of dictionaries in general and technical fields and other research works.

There are some other academic institutes established in the 1960s which are engaged in studies of Tibetan Buddhism and have made a significant contribution to the preservation and dissemination of the tradition *viz.* Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Sikkim, the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Leh Laddhakh, and the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, and the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, both in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh. The Tsongtsan Library, Center for Tibetan and Himalayan Studies, Dehradun, Uttaranchal, established in 2003, is also engaged in Buddhist academic studies.

With his teachings on compassion and love, His Holiness the Dalai Lama emerged as a global icon of peace, and became an inspiring source for millions of people around the world. His tireless effort to address the crisis of moral value in modern society has made a



Monks during the convocation of Namdroling monastery, Karnataka, South India, 4th September, 2010



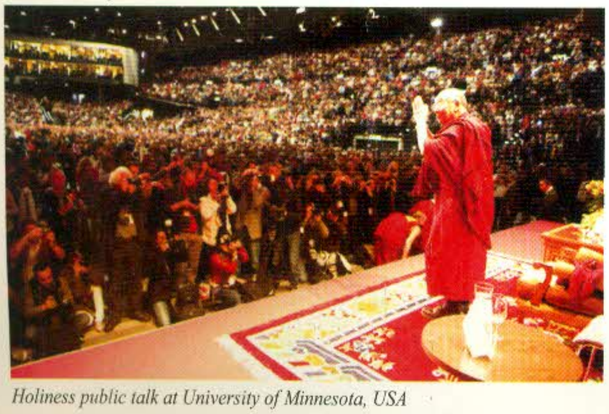
Shantarakshita Central Library of Central University of Tibetan Studies, Sarnath significant impact in the realms of spirituality, education and scientific research. His attempt promote religious harmony by bringing the people of different religious traditions closer through developing mutual respect and understanding has been highly appreciated.

Another important contribution he has made is to bring together the two great knowledge systems of humanity, the science of modern civilization and the spiritual traditions - particularly Buddhism of ancient civilization - through interaction and dialogue. This has made a phenomenal impact on the domain of science, which led to opening new avenues of scientific research. On the other hand science subjects are introduced to the monastics to extend the area of their study and analysis through debate, which is an integral part of their regular study in philosophy, epistemology, and logic.

Given his overwhelming spiritual weight, scholarship, intellectual pursuit and tireless efforts for peace at global level, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has been awarded the Noble Peace Prize, the highest honors of many countries, and honorary degrees and from over 150 countries worldwide. He has written over 100 books, which are widely read and many have been translated into several languages.

He is looked upon as a ray of hope for the upliftment of humanity, which is going through crises of moral values, education system, and social relations, fundamentally the consequence of the neglect of the inner world and the desire for material development of modern society. He advocates keeping the balance of the two in that inner value and material development can co-exist as the former could curb the latter becoming extreme.

So far as Buddhism within Tibet in the last couple of decades is concerned, some of the monasteries in Tibet have been allowed to revive their functions of teachings and practices with a limited number of monks and nuns. A few of the destroyed monasteries have been partly restored by the Tibetan communities.



Holiness public talk at University of Minnesota, USA

Tibetan Buddhism is a rare system of knowledge and wisdom with a great treasure of literature that survives to this day through an uninterrupted living tradition that came from the great monastic universities of ancient India, primarily, from Nalanda and nurtured and developed further in Tibet. As it had been influential in the past, the impact of Tibetan Buddhism is seen growing in all the traditional Mahayana countries including Mainland China. Its encounter with modern civilization has opened new avenues for constructive evolution in human history.

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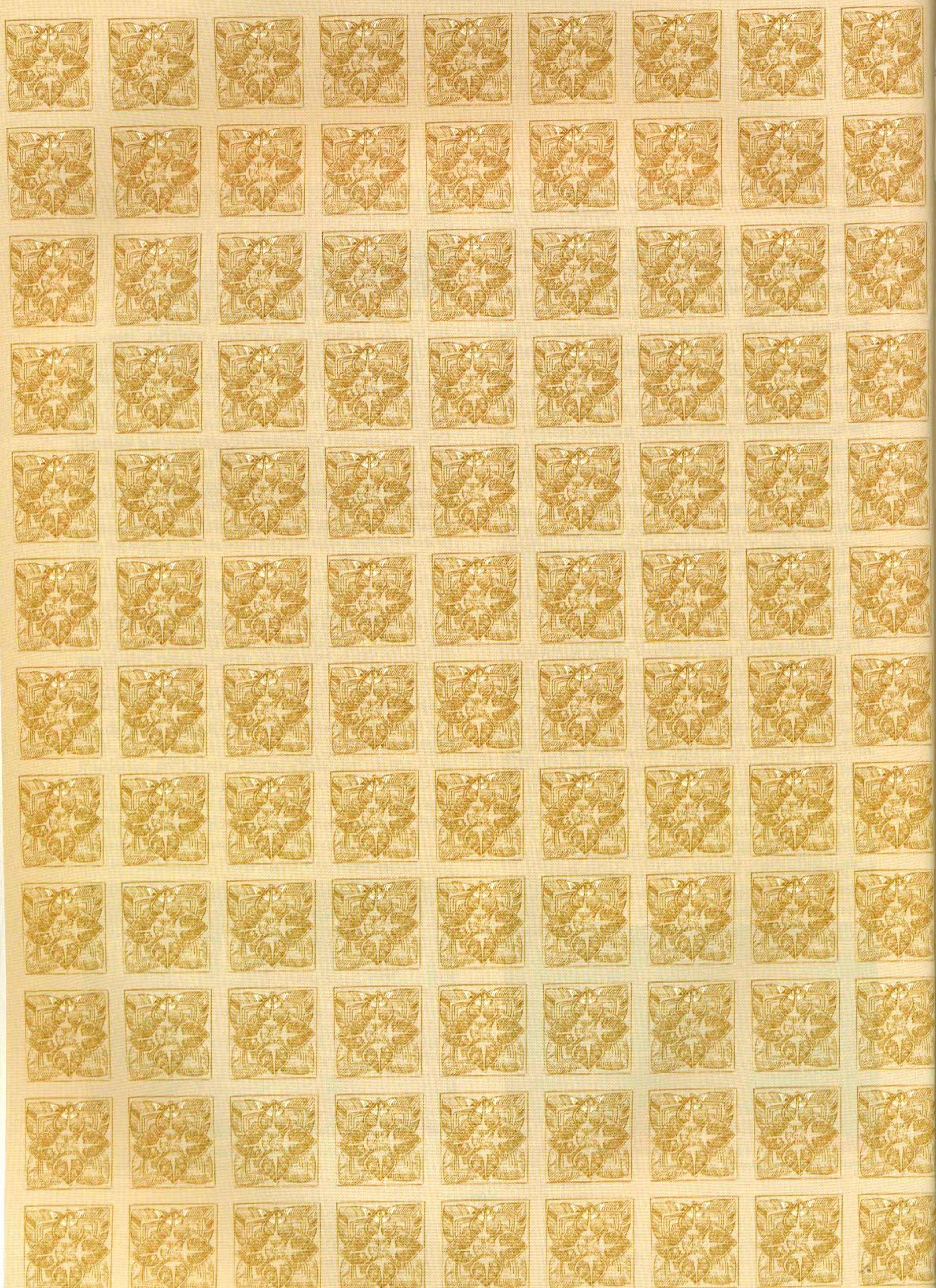
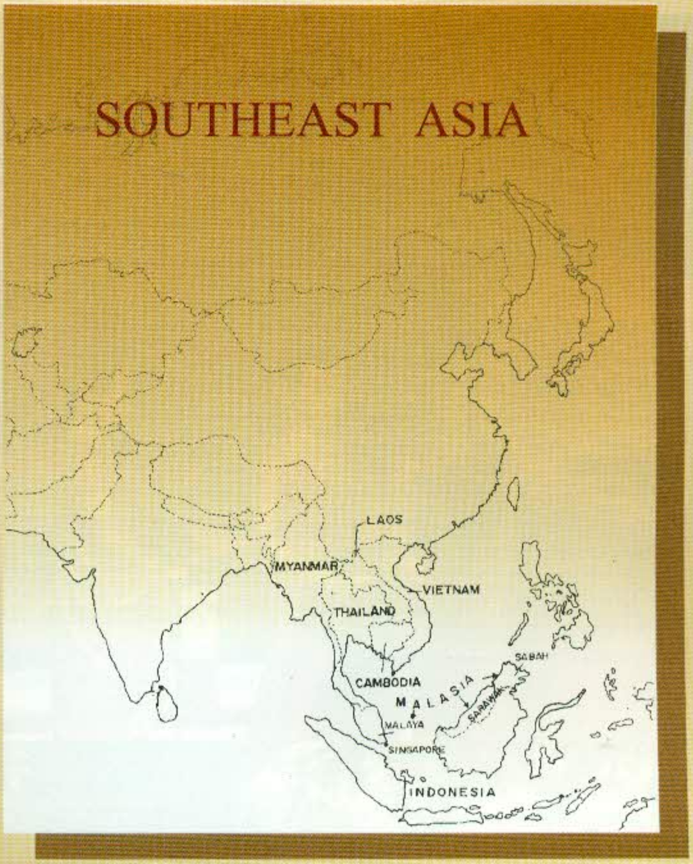


SOUTHEAST ASIA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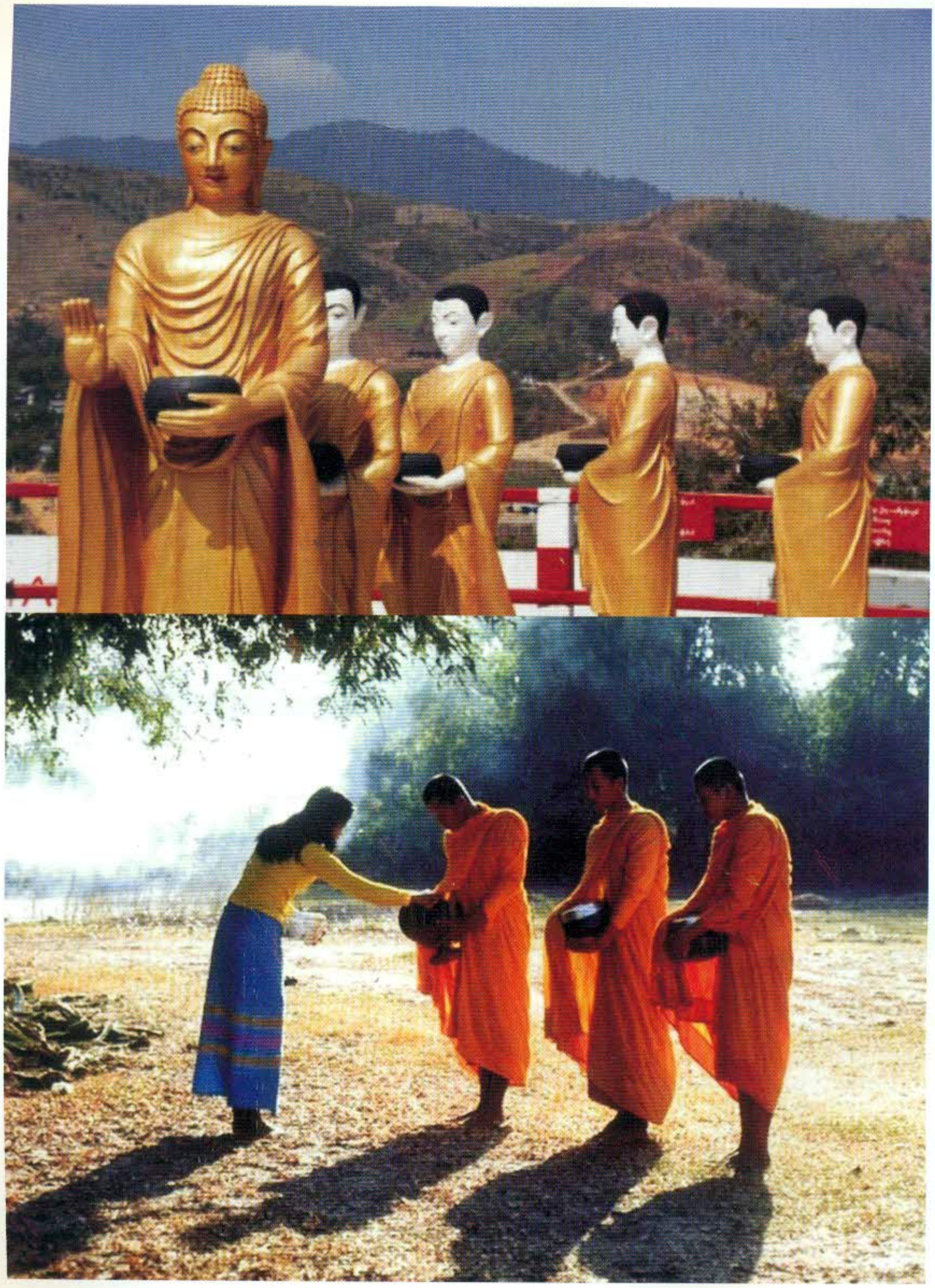

ESSAY 9

Buddhism in the Union of Myanmar

A Brief Overview of 2,000 Years

Ven. Khammai Dhammasami

Introduction

The Union of Myanmar, known as the Union of Burma until 1989, is a country where Buddhism has flourished for perhaps 2,000 years or more. The country is rich in legends of the Buddha's visits to various parts of the country, while archaeological evidence demonstrates a living Buddhist tradition in parts of Myanmar from perhaps the first or second century CE. These strands of practice have evolved over the centuries as a monastic development, a project of royal patronage, and as an educational programme for both monastics and laity.

The country also boasts a rich diversity of "nationalities", around 90% of which embrace Theravada Buddhism (with 4% Christianity,[1] 4% Islam,[2] 1% Hinduism[3] and the rest animism) each with their own distinctive identity and ways of practice. Here, for this reason and following a new trend set by Bischoff (1995), an attempt is made to present a broad picture encompassing Buddhists of those various ethnic groups, offering an overview of the history of Buddhism in the Union of Myanmar earlier than the Bagan, also Pagan, period (1044–1287 CE). In so doing, I will make an effort to offer an understanding of Buddhist history as presented by different ethnic groups of Buddhists themselves as well as by distinguished scholars from elsewhere whose selected work I use extensively here. For the information from the seventeenth century onward, I draw from my own doctoral research, primarily from the *Royal Orders of Burma* previously inadequately explored. Besides, this paper deals exclusively with Theravada Buddhism because Mahayana Buddhism is usually confined to the community of new immigrants from China; well built Chinese Mahayana temples, known in the Burmese as *bon-kyaung* (community school and temple), can be easily found in big cities. The majority of Burmese-born Chinese descents tend to embrace Theravada Buddhism, retaining some Mahayana Buddhist elements such as Kuan Yin, even Taoist beliefs. There is no Vajrayana Buddhism in Myanmar, although Myanmar Theravadins widely use rosary in meditation, something akin to Vajrayana practice.

This essay generally attempts to trace the development of Buddhism in the Union of Myanmar from the earliest records of legend and archaeology to the present day. First, I will discuss some main milestones and further explain the evolution of the Myanmar Saṅgha, and elucidate how this has been influenced by the various regions through Myanmar history. Finally, I will outline the various ways in which Buddhism is also an educational project in Myanmar, both for monastics and laity, and explain briefly the rich diversity of meditation tradition and teaching which have flourished since the turn of the last century.

Early Legends on the Arrival of Buddhism

Buddhists in the Union of Myanmar believe their country was called Suvaṇṇabhumi (Sk. Suvaṇṇabhumi), "the golden land", one of the nine countries that received Buddhist missions from Emperor Asoka (304–232 BCE). Suvaṇṇabhumi is said to have existed in the present Thaton, south of Yangon (formerly Rangoon). Thaton is a corrupt Burmese form of the Mon word, Sadhuim, itself derived from Sudhaṃṃa(vati) in Pali, after Sudhaṃṃa, the Great Assembly Hall of the Gods in the Heaven of the Thirty-three, Tavatimsa Heaven.[4] Thaton was the seat of one of the Mon kingdoms whose last king, Manuha (1030s -1057 CE), was defeated by King Anawrahta (Anuruddha) of Bagan (1014–1077 CE). A similar claim to Suvaṇṇabhumi is made by Buddhists in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. Thailand, for example, presents the Nakhon-pathom cetiya, believed to have been built by the Mon, as one of the evidence to their claim. Indeed, recently Thailand has named its biggest international airport as Suvaṇṇabhumi. The controversy of identifying Suvaṇṇabhumi and a Buddhist mission led, as described in the Mahavaṃsa[5], by two arahants, Sona and Uttara, has persisted until today in South-East Asia. While a Mon historian asserts that Suvaṇṇabhumi covers both old Siam (Thailand) and old Myanmar,[6] others (i.e. most non-Burmese and non-Thai scholars) believe that it must have denoted the whole of South-East Asia.

With regard to the arrival of Buddhism in Myanmar there are many legends, later incorporated into chronicles. Legend not only claims that the first two lay disciples, Taphussa and Bhallika (also written as Taphassu and Bhalluka), were from a Mon Kingdom, now part of Lower Myanmar, but also that the Buddha visited what is now

Lower and Middle Myanmar twice. Given the presence of Indian settlements along the coast "from Bengal to Borneo", tribes of Lower Myanmar, along the coastal trade route, must have received Buddhism well before the eleventh century when Myanmar began to establish a close relation with Sri Lanka. Some suggest that parts of Lower Myanmar and those of Thailand were inhabited by Indian traders before they were conquered by the Mon. Upon their conquest, the Mon may have absorbed the culture of the conquered. This could partly explain the incorporation of Buddhist motifs into their own legends.

A Mon legend claims that Tapussa and Bhallika, the two merchant brothers from Ukkala, who met the Buddha at Rijayatana near Uruvelajust after he came out of the seven-week meditation, were Mon. The two brothers offered the Buddha rice cakes and honey and took refuge in the Buddha and his teaching, before being given eight hairs by the Buddha for their worship. The hairs were believed to have been enshrined in a stupa, which is now the famous Shwedagon Pagoda. Later, the Myanmar also named part of Yangon[7] as Ukkalapa. The meeting with the Buddha by Taphussa and Bhallika is a well-known legend in Sri Lanka; in this version the brothers are not considered to have come from the Mon Kingdom of Lower Myanmar. In fact scholars believe Ukkalla is the name of "a district in the region identified with modern Orissa" in modern India.[8] Here, by claiming that in the Shwedagon, the holiest site in the country, are enshrined some eight sacred hairs of the Buddha brought by the two brothers, Myanmar is asserting that it is one of the earliest nations to have received the Buddha's dhaṃṃa.

As to the legendary visits by the Buddha to Myanmar, another Mon legend says that five years after his enlightenment the Buddha was invited to Suvaṇṇabhumi, Thaton, by Gavaṃpati, an eleven-year-old arahant who had been a novice for four years. At Suvaṇṇabhumi, accompanied by twenty thousand arahants, the Buddha gave Gavaṃpati a prophecy saying that "after my cremation, you shall carry [my] thirty-three teeth to Suvaṇṇabhumi and dwell here."[9] Gavaṃpati as the emissary of the Buddha has been revered throughout the ages featuring in some inscriptions, not just among the Mon in Thaton and Bago but also among the Myanmar in Bagan.[10] Gavaṃpati Buddhism at Suvaṇṇabhumi is said to have lasted nearly 140 years until the city state was "destroyed by the seas", perhaps by a modern day tsunami; in this case, it was said to be fashioned by Sakka, king of gods, who took the action after Prince Aṅkura "cruelly maligned" his father, the great king Dhaṃṃadhaja, with false accusations of unrighteousness."[11]

In another legend, Myanmar Buddhists consider a town in central Myanmar, Magwe, as Sunapranta, where a merchant, Pua, is said to have originated; he is believed to have attained arahatship after he met the Buddha and received his teaching in Sravasti. This Punna, the legend asserts, is the Puṇṇa Thera to whom the Buddha taught Puṇṇovada-sutta in the Majjhima-nikaya, although the sutta does not identify any place as Sunaparanta. Here, it should be noted that Pannasāmi, the author of Sasanavaṃsa, a chronicle of Buddhism in Burma written in Pali in 1851, identifies five of the nine Asokan missions to be in South-East Asia: (1) the Pyu Kingdom as Vanavasa; (2) Thailand as Maharattha; (3) the Shan State and Northern Thailand as Yonaka; (4) Rṇmannadesa, the Mon Kingdom, as Suvaṇṇabhumi. Arahat Punna is said to have invited the Buddha to Sunaparanta, who visited the region after twenty years of his enlightenment. The Buddha is believed to have left two footprints on the Minbu Hills near a river, Namanta, for the veneration of local people. After the war in the fourteenth century, the knowledge of the footprints was lost and only rediscovered by a search party led by the learned monk by the name of Taungpilar Sayadaw Munidaghosa during the reign of King Thalun (1629-1648 CE). The footprints, known in Burmese as *shwesetdaw,* "Golden Footprints", have since become one of the most visited pilgrimage sites in Myanmar.[12]

Besides, a local chronicle in Rakhine (Arakan), also in Lower Myanmar, claims that during this trip the Buddha also visited their country known as Dannavati. The visit was in response to a strong desire of King Chandasuriya to visit and learn the dhaṃṃa from the Buddha. Foreseeing the dangers that the king and his entourage would face along the way, the Buddha is said to have instead decided to visit the Rakhine kingdom, where he stayed for a week during which he taught the king ten duties and responsibilities of a ruler. Before his departure and at the request of the king, an image of the Buddha was made in metal. That image is known as Mahamuni, "great sage". Like the Tooth Relic in Sri Lanka and the Emerald Buddha Statue in Thailand, the Mahamuni has always been in state possession, signifying the influence of Buddhism in bestowing political legitimacy, and was removed from Rakhine to the Myanmar capital, Amarapara, by King Bodawpaya (1782-1819 CE) who conquered the Arakanese in 1784. The Mahamuni Temple is the most visited pilgrimage site in Mandalay today.[13]

Archaeological Findings: the Pyu, the Mon and the Rakhine

The Pyu

While the belief in the earliest arrival of Buddhism after the Mahaparinibbana of the Buddha is based on the identification of Suvaṇṇabhumi with Thaton, archaeological findings suggest that Buddhism arrived in Myanmar sometime later than those legendary claims. Scholars are of the opinion that Buddhism may have been established at least by the second or perhaps even the first century CE among the Pyu and the Mon. Janice Stargardt, an expert on the Pyu, writes that:

> "from the mixture of alphabetical styles - all of South Indian origin - contained on this small seal one can deduce that the Pyu became acquainted with the Pali language and Brahmi scripts from about the second century onwards . . . an early knowledge of Buddhism and Buddhist texts in the second century, which may have been confined to relatively few people, the influence of Buddhism on the Pyu clearly grew in strength until, in the fourth century, a major monastic foundation was built which represents for the time being the first datable Buddhist monument in Burma."[14]

Bischoff describes this monastery as follows:

> "The earliest highly developed urban settlement of the Pyu was Beikthano [Burmese corrupt form of Sk. Vishnu], near Prome Pyi)", a major monastery dated to the fourth century was unearthed. "The building, constructed in brick, with a stupa and shrine located nearby, is identical to the Buddhist monasteries of Nagarjunakonda, the great Buddhist centre of southern India. It is situated near a stupa and a shrine, a design which is identical to the one used in South India. Bricks had been used by the Pyus since the second century CE for the construction of pillared halls, which formed the temples of their original religion. Interestingly, the Pyu bricks have always been of the exact dimensions as those used at the time of Emperor Asoka in India. But the bricklaying techniques used in the monastery in Beikthano were far inferior to the ones used in their southern Indian counterparts."[15]

Startgardt discusses the inscription from the Pyu era as further evidence of Buddhist influence from India:

> "Evidence found at Sri Ksetra shows that the fourth century was a period when Buddhism became firmly rooted in Pyu culture". Gold plates inscribed with excerpts from the Pali canon were discovered between 1897 and 1929 in and around Mawza Village, Prome, now known as Pyi. Written in Kadamba scripts, they have been dated to the fifth century CE."[16]

The Pali passages inscribed on those gold plates are from the *Vinaya*- and *Sutta*-piṭaka. The question surrounding the language of those passages has also been settled by modern Pali scholars: the language is now considered to be pure Pali, not Pyu-Pali as previously considered.

> "These inscriptions reveal three texts: the verses spoken by Assaji to Sariputta (*ye dhamma hetuppabhava...*), a list of categories of the Abhidhaṃṃa(*cattaro iddhipada, cattaro saṃṃappadhana...*), and the formula of worship of Buddha, Dhaṃṃa, and Saṅgha (*iti pi so bhagava...svakkhato bhagavata dhammo... suppatippanno bhagavato*). Nearby a book with twenty leaves of gold protected with golden covers, was discovered. It contained texts such as the *paticca-samuppada* (dependent origination), the *vipassana-nanas* (stages of insight knowledge), and various other excerpts from the Abhidhaṃṃa and the other two baskets of the Buddhist scriptures. The scripts in all these documents are identical to scripts used in parts of southern India, and can be dated from the third to the sixth century CE."[17]

Bischoff summarizes:

> The inscriptions show how highly developed scholarship of the Pali Buddhist texts must have been in Lower Myanmar even in these early days. Learning had gone well beyond the basics into the world of Abhidhaṃṃa studies. Pali was obviously well known as a language of learning, but unfortunately no original texts composed in Sri Ksetra or Thaton have come down to us. Interestingly, some of the texts inscribed on these gold plates are not identical to the same canonical texts as they are known today. Therefore, the Tipiṭaka known to the Pyu must have been replaced by a version preserved in a country that had no close contact with the Pyu. This could well have been Sri Lanka, as this country came to play an important role in the history of Buddhism in Myanmar through the friendship between the conqueror of Lower Myanmar, Anawrahta, and the king who drove the Hindus from Sri Lanka, Vijayabahu.[18]
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> In addition to these golden plates, a number of sculptures and reliefs were found in Hmawza. They depict either the Buddha or scenes from his life, for example, the birth of the Buddha and the taming of the wild elephant Nalagiri. The sculpture is similar in style to that of Amaravati, a center of Buddhist learning in South India. There were also unearthed remains of Brahman temples and sites of Mahayana worship of east Indian origin; hence it would appear that several

> faiths, of which the Theravada was the strongest, co-existed in Sri Ksetra, the then capital of the Pyu. The script used by the Pyu is indicative of major links with Buddhist kingdoms in South India rather than with Sri Lanka. And it can be surmised that the bhikkhus of the Deccan and other regions of southern India were the teachers of both the Mon and the Pyu in religious matters as well as in the arts and sciences.[19]

Moore also offers an account of the discovery at Sriksetra when she writes that "steles were [also] found in triads, six at Kyaukka (Settaing) Thein Kyaung [sima monastery], south of the Hmawza railway station. These measured 120-180cm in height and over 150-180cm in width. Another large stele, some 245cm high, 187.5cm wide and 37.5cm thick, was found at the Bebe Zeidi. Most are carved with the images of the Buddha, although some depict Bodhisattvas and a one (circa 1.5m) bears a figure variously identified as *dvarapala* and as a *garuda* or *galon*. A stele (1.5m) dated to the fourth or fifth century CE, found within the Sriksetra walls in the 1970s, depicts a stout warrior-king figure."[20] "A related inscription in Pyu and Sanskrit is found on the throne of a seated (now headless) image (57cm) in *Dyani mudra*. The styles of this image, with its narrow torso, broad shoulders both covered by a transparent robe, and flat layering of the legs, is comparable to seventh century CE images from Sri Lanka."[21] The finds on the site of the ancient Pyu capital confirm the reports of the Chinese pilgrims and also the Tang [618– 907 AD] imperial chronicles of China which state: "They (the Pyu) dislike taking life. They know how to make astronomical calculations. They are Buddhists and have a hundred monasteries, with brick of glass embellished with gold and silver vermilion, gay colours and red kino. . .At seven years of age the people cut their hair and enter a monastery; if at the age of twenty they have not grasped the doctrine they return to the lay state."[22]

The Mon

Another nationality of today's Myanmar who may have received Buddhism as early as the first or second century CE was the Mon.[23] Here, in discussing Theravada Buddhism among the Mon, one should look beyond the present Myanmar. Archaeological findings date the first Mon kingdom as Dvaravati, which covered, according to the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Hsuan-tsang (also Yuan Chwang) (c. 602–664), a vast territory of South-East Asia "stretching from Prome to Chenla in the east and including the Irrawaddy and Sittang deltas". Some of the votive medallions bearing inscriptions such as "the meritorious work of the King of Dvaravati" were discovered at the site of Phra Pathom in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand.[24] The annals of the court of China for the same period mention both Dvaravati and Thaton with the former as a vassal of the latter.[25] Briggs reports in 1945 in the *Journal of American Oriental Society* that the archaeological findings of Dvaravati include: "Skeletons believed to be of the first century. . .a Roman lam, of perhaps the second century or earlier, a small image of the Buddha belonging to the Amaravatī period (150-350 CE), wheel of the law and many votive tablets of an indeterminate, but early, period, and enough Buddha images and bas-releifs of the Gupta period (320-600 CE) to make a separate division in the National Museum, Bangkok".[26]

It is evident that the Mon also had a good connection with Buddhist kings in South India from where they received their scripts, law and civilization. "In a third century CE inscription by a South Indian king in Nagarjunakonda, the land of the Cilatas is mentioned in a list of countries visited by a group of bhikkhus. Historians believe the Cilatas or Kiratas to be identical to the Mon populations of Lower Myanmar. The inscription states that the bhikkhus sent to the Cilata country converted the population there to Buddhism. In the same inscription, missions to other countries such as Sri Lanka are mentioned."[27]

The Rakhine

Another nationality within the present Myanmar whose Theravada Buddhism was linked to Pyu influence was Rakhine. "The stone inscriptions written in Sanskrit, Pali, Rakhine, Pyu languages, found in the Rakhine region, particularly the Anandachandra inscriptions date back to 729 CE and are now preserved in Shitethaung Temple. The presence of the Pyu language would suggest that Theravada Buddhism from the Pyu Kingdom spread to the Rakhien regions. This is confirmed by the fact that the inscriptions also have a similar Pali verse *ye dhamma hetuppabuava / Tathagato aha / tesaṃ ca yo niyodho / evaṃvadi Mahasamano*. Indeed, Moore writes that, "like the Pyu and the Mon, the Rakhine kingdoms of Dhannavati and Vesali "have similar traits to both Pyu and Mon walled sites such as enclosure of sites with walls and the use of silver coins." "Like the Pyu walled sites, Dhannyawati and Vesali both have a central citadel-palace enclosure."[28] However, "the closest Indian style and iconography of the Rakhine artifacts is that of Mathura whereas Pyu and Mon links are more akin to the styles of Amaravati and Gupta India." So, there was "interaction between Rakhine, Pyu and Mon rulers".[29] In Dhannavati the Mahamuni temple is located on the Sirigutta hill. In this temple, the Mahamuni image was enshrined.

King Anawrahta and the Bagan Era

Buddhist culture was largely eradicated in the eleventh century by the Myanmar, who, under their unifying leader, King Anawrahta (1044–1077 CE), attacked the Mon Kingdom of Thaton and took its ruler, King Manuha, as captive to Bagan,[30] which was known also as Arimaddnapura, "City of the Crusher of Enemies". Anawarahta is regarded by the successive rulers of Myanmar to have founded the first unified Myanmar in history and his heroic status and that of a pious Buddhist king is perpetuated through many chronicles and national mythology. It is this celebrated position of King Anawrahta in Myanmar history that sometime encourages a narrative of the history of Buddhism in Myanmar to start only from Bagan. This is often done in the context of the Union of Myanmar as a nation, sometime referred to as an empire, which has been re-established four times by four Myanmar kings, namely Anawrahta (1044-1077 CE), Bayingnaung (1551-1581 CE), Alaungpaya U Aung Zeyya (1752-1760 CE) and General Aung San (1946-1947 CE). Unfortunately, this new trend of narrative tends to neglect the earlier history of Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar in the Pyu, Mon and Rakhine kingdoms.

It is said that Anawarahta was introduced to Theravada Buddhism by a Mon monk from Thaton, Shin Arahan.[31] Myanmar chronicles give two accounts of how Shin Arahan came to Bagan. Most say that he came from Thaton to Bagan to convert King Anawarahat; he was first found in his forest dwelling by a hunter who thought him strange and therefore decided to take him to the king. The other account, presented by the Sasanavamsa, suggests that Shin Arahan came from Sri Lanka to study the dhaṃṃa in Dvaravati and Thaton; he was on his way to Sri Ksetra looking for a text when he was captured by a hunter. Upon being asked by the monarch who he was, Shin Arahan answered that he was a disciple of Gotama the Buddha and then explained about the Three Jewels. The king was told that the Buddha had entered into *parinibbana*, but that his teaching, enshrined in the Tipiṭaka, and the twofold Saṅgha consisting of "enlightened and conventional Saṅgha, remained. The story of Anawarahta's conversion looks in part like that of Emperor Asoka. Just as Nigrodha Samanera sat on the throne upon arriving in the royal hall, as it was the highest seat, Shin Arahan did the same. Both also taught the respective rulers about mindfulness, *appamada*. However, after his conversion Asoka is known to have ceased waging war and instead started *dhaṃṃa-vijaya*, "conquest through dhaṃṃa", while Anawrahta is said to have crushed Thaton.

After his conversion to Theravada Buddhism, Anawrahta is considered to have set out "to procure the scriptures and holy relics" of the Buddha because "he wished his kingdom to be secure in the original teachings of the Buddha. He tried. . .in different quarters. In his enthusiasm he did not limit his quest to Thaton, but also searched among the Khmer in Angkor, and in Tali, the capital of the Nanchao Tai, a kingdom in modern day Yunnan, in China, where a tooth of the Buddha was enshrined. But everywhere he was refused. He then went to Thaton, where his teacher Shin Arahan had come from, to request a copy of the scriptures. According to the tradition of Myanmar, Anawratha's request was refused, and unable to endure another refusal he set out with his army in the year 1057 to conquer Thaton and took away "Mon artists and scholars and, above all, Thaton's bhikkhus and their holy books, the Tipiṭaka. Suvaṇṇabhumi and its Mon population were now in the hands of the Myanmar and the Mon culture and religion were accepted and assimilated in the emergent Bagan with fervour." Before conquering Thaton, however, he had to subjugate Sri Ksetra, the Pyu capital. From there, he took the relics enshrined in King Dwattabaung's Bawbaw-gyi Pagoda to Bagan."[32]

Prior to and in the early reign of King Anawrahta, the dominant religion among the Myanmar seems to be a form of Mahayana Buddhism, known as Ari, which Bischoff thinks to have "probably found its way into the region from the Pala kingdom in Bengal. . .apparent from bronze statues depicting Bodhisattas and especially the "Lokanatha", a Bodhisatta, believed in Bengal, to reign in the period between the demise of the Buddha Gotama and the advent of the Buddha Metteyya."[33] Over the centuries, Myanmar people continue to believe that Lokanatha, usually identified with Avalokitesvara, bestows a special blessing for unity. In the 1980s, a banknote carried his picture. The Ari monks are described in later Myanmar chronicles as bogus monks who practiced "the rights of seniority", meaning a bride had to offer her virginity to an Ari monk before being allowed to marry.[34] Under the Ari, the worship of many gods and goddesses called *nat* also prevailed. Advised by Shin Arahan, King Anawrahta is said to have first banned *nat* worship before making a compromise when faced by a possible revolt on the issue. One can see in Bagan today a place where the king allowed the only place for *nat* worship. It is called *nat hlaung kan*, "*nats'* prison", because all the images of *nats* were ordered to be kept there. Many former Ari monks, reportedly numbering some 60,000, were recruited into the king's army, "as spear-carriers, haulers of elephant and horse dung".

From the beginning of the Bagan period, there were contacts between the new kings of Myanmar and Sri Lanka that are recorded not only in the chronicles of the two countries but also in stone inscriptions in South India. "In his fight against the Hindu Colas, King Vijayabahu in 1070 is said to have been assisted financially by King Anawrahta who also sent some bhikkhus to strengthen Buddhism in the island." Because of the long connection between Sri Lanka and the Mon Kingdom prior to this time, Anawrahta was referred to in the Culavaṃsa refers as the king of Ramanna, which was Lower Myanmar, also called Suvaṇṇabhumi. He was approached as the king of Thaton, a respected Theravada centre, rather than as that of Bagan, which was perhaps still unknown to the Sri Lankan.[35] Bhikkhus from Bagan often went on pilgrimage to Sri Lanka and brought back with them the Tipiṭaka in Sinhalese scripts. The trend continued even during the unstable political situation towards the end of the Pagan period: an inscription of 1268 tells of an educational mission, "under the leadership of Dhaṃṃasiri and Subhuticanda to Ceylon probably between 1237 and 1248".[36] An inscription in Pagan dated 1233 CE "mentions the presence" of a monk, Buddharaṃsi from *sinkhuih,* Ceylon, "who was then the head of a monastic establishment [in Bagan] to which the donor gave land and servants".[37] Buddharaṃsi must have been one of the Sinhalese monks who were settled in Bagan. One inscription mentions many Sinhalese monks witnessing a donor's "deeds of merit".[38]

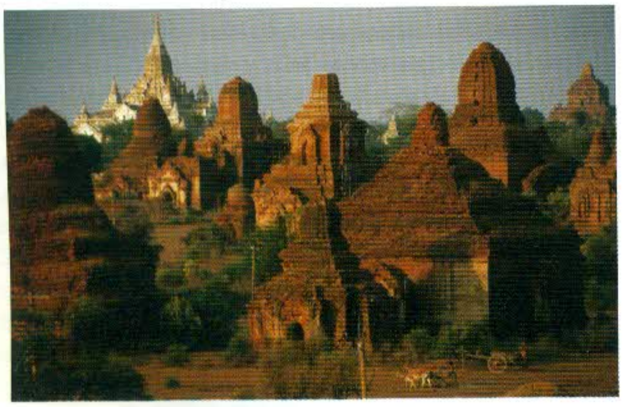
Monks from Bagan looked to Ceylon for authority. The trend continued even during the unstable political situation towards the end of the Pagan period: an inscription of 1268 tells of an educational mission, "under the leadership of Dhaṃṃasiri and Subhuticanda to Ceylon probably between 1237 and 1248".[39]

Anawrahta left behind "numerous small Buddhist terracotta votive plaques found throughout much of Myanmar"[40] adorned with images of the Buddha, the king's name, and some Pali and Sanskrit verses. A typical aspiration on these tablets was: "By me, King Anawratha, this mould of Sugata (Buddha) has been made. Through this may I obtain the path to Nibbāna when Metteyya is awakened."[41]

Despite the strong presence of Theravada Buddhism, Hinduism was also popular in Bagan, mainly for rituals at the secular royal court. For example, there is an inscription describing "the consecration of the palace" of Anawrahta's former commander-in-chief and successor to his son, King Kyanzittha (1084-1113 CE), "with Mon priests invoking Vishnu and Buddhist monks reciting Pali prayers." Kyanzittha was also considered to be "reincarnated from the Hindu god Vishnu, and his birth was foretold at an ancient Pyu city of Sriksetra by the Buddha".[42]

Kyanzitta continued royal patronage, consolidating Theravada Buddhism in Bagan, building famous shrines such as the Shwezigon Pagoda, and the Nanda, Nagayon, and Myinkaba Kubyauk-gyi temples, with a new style of architecture with a hollowed mound. Luce writes: "The Nanda (temple). . .he built with four broad halls. Each hall had the same sixteen scenes in stone relief all identically arranged. The bhikkhus could cope with four audiences simultaneously. The scenes cover the whole life of the Buddha. When well grounded in these, the audience would pass to the outer wall of the corridor. Here, running around the whole corridor are the eighty scenes of Gotama's life up to the Enlightenment. The later life of the Buddha is shown in hundreds of other stone reliefs on the inner walls and shrines".[43] Kyanzittha also commissioned stone reliefs depicting the Buddha's life and Jataka stories.

Kyanzitta's aim was the conversion of his people



Bagan

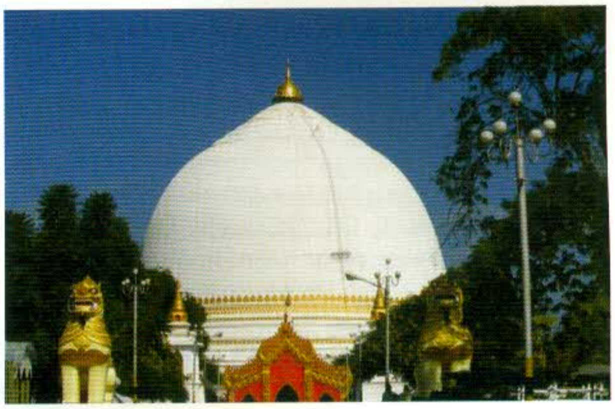
Shwezigon Pagoda

to the new faith. Burmese scripts were created perhaps during his reign, while retaining the written Mon. Pali and Pyu remained probably the languages of the elite. All the four languages were indeed used by Prince Rajakumar in the inscriptions, re-discovered in 1886-87 by archaeologist Emil Forchhammer, Professor of Pali at Rangoon College, soon after the British annexation of Upper Myanmar, and are now housed at Bagan Museum. Besides, Kyanzitta "sent craftsmen to Bodhgaya to repair the Mahabodhi temple, which had been destroyed by a foreign king. The upkeep of the Mahabodhi temple became a tradition with the kings of Myanmar, who continued to send missions to Bodhgaya to repair the temple and also to donate temple slaves and land to the holiest shrine of Buddhism".[44] Kyanzitta also initiated an editing of the Tipiṭaka by the bhikkhus comparing two versions of the Sinhalese and Suvaṇṇabhumi, the first time in Bagan's history such a task was undertaken. "Though the Burmese began their literary history by borrowing from their conquered neighbours, the Mon and not before the eleventh century — the growth of Pali scholarship among them was so rapid that the epoch following close on this tardy beginning is considered one of the best that Burma has seen."[45]

"Bagan symbolizes a remarkable mobilization of resources and peoples that saw few parallels in the ancient world. Religious aspirations fuelled this building boom, but a powerful state organization was required to transform millions of bricks into thousands of monuments. Kings and commoners alike were linked together in a fervid construction campaign producing over two thousand monuments [over 900 temples, 500 stupas and 400 monasteries] between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries."[46] Some well-known stupas with the largest structures are "Ananda, Nagayon, Thatbyinnu, Sulamani (Caḷamaṇi) and Dhammayazika (Dhaṃmayajika), and all are traditionally dated to the late eleventh and twelfth centuries."[47] "Painting and sculpture [depicting mainly of the major life events of the Buddha], were the flesh and bones of the city's great houses of worship.[48] "A stable flow of wood fuel was required for the many kilns that produced the staggering amount of brick needed for Bagan's expansion started in the eleventh century."[49] Bagan which might have been a wet land area with rice cultivation before may have become short of wood due to the production of bricks. "Dhaṃmayazikastupa alone roughly consumed 6 million bricks, based on estimates of its volumes."[50] "The total population of monks at any time at Bagan is difficult to estimate, but one inscription from the twelfth century refers to 4,180 monks attending one service"[51] "with our lord Chief Monk Arahan, who was the leader in reciting the *Paritta* blessing".[52]

Later, despite the political power shift from Bagan to Ava, "the larger and more important temples were never abandoned".[53] Indeed, Buddhist monuments in Bagan continued to be important throughout the history of Buddhism in Myanmar, in both the periods of Ava (1364-1557 CE) and Konbaung (1752-1885 CE). "One stone inscription at Bagan dated 1442 provides a record of the wide range of learning that probably also characterized the earlier period. It records a specific donation by a governor and his wife, comprising a monastery endowed with rice fields and servants, together with 295 palm-leaf manuscripts" including "commentaries on the Pali canon, chronicles from Sri Lanka, and treaties on Hindu statecraft, medicines, astronomy and astrology."[54] King Bodawpaya (1782-1819 CE) renovated the Shwezigon stupa and refurbished the Thatbyinnyu.[55] Some notable monuments built during the Konbaung period were "the Upali Sima ordination hall, the Ananda Temple Monastery and the Piṭakataik [library]. They were donated, however, not by the royals but by lay donors

Dhammayangyi Temple



Kaunghmudaw Pagoda

from immediate and outside Bagan areas.[56]

The crucial motivation in undertaking major construction work such as temples, stupas, or monasteries was to accumulate merits often stated as "to achieve Buddhahood, or nirvana or the end of the cycle of rebirths", or "to be reborn in order to witness Metteyya Buddha". "The most deep and enduring" "spiritual beliefs" "stemmed from the Pali canon, proved by thousands of ink inscriptions drawn directly from the Pali texts."[57]

During the reign of King Narapatisithu (1174–1211 CE) at Bagan, the saṅgha became divided into two: Myanmar lineage and Sinhala lineage. Before the division arose, Uttarajiva, a Mon descent, who was royal spiritual teacher for the three reigns (1160-1191 CE, went to Sri Lanka on pilgrimage with some of his pupils, including Chappada whom he and the Sinhalese Elders jointly ordained as a bhikkhu and whom left in Sri Lanka for further study.[58] After ten years in Sri Lanka and having received ordination in the hands of the Sinhala saṅgha, Chappada returned to Bagan in 1180 with four other bhikkhus, some of whom were native of Sri Lanka. There he founded out that less than a week before his arrival in Bagan his teacher had passed away and the king's new royal preceptor, who by that virtue became also the nominal head of the monastic order, was of Myanmar descent and whom he viewed as lax in discipline and did not want to associate with.[59]

Here, one may deduce that the saṅgha at Bagan had by and large existed through two linguistic lines, Mon and Myanmar, although both may have traced their spiritual lineage back to Thaton. But Chappada had no royal support to abolish the existing monastic order, later to be known as *ancient* saṅgha, so with his four friends he founded a new fraternity, which became known as Sihalasaṅgha[60] following the Sinhalese Saṅgha, purified and reformed by King Parakkamabahu I (1153–1186 CE) of Polonnaruwa in Sri Lanka. King Narapatisithu or Narapatijayasrra came to have "a feeling of great esteem and reverence" for this new fraternity.[61] However, the king gave patronage to both fraternities. As is well-known, in subsequent years the Sinhala fraternity became divided into three following disagreements on some vinaya points between the three original founders, the Elders Ananda, Tamalinda and Sivali, thus the saṅgha lineages divided into four. In following centuries and in the new kingdoms of Myanmar, the saṅgha would remain divided.

Chabada, known as Saddhaṃṃajotipala, wrote some commentarial works in Pali. These included the *Suttaniddesa*, on *Kaccayana's* Pali grammar, and the *Sankhepavaṇṇana,* on the *Abhidhaṃṃatthasaṅgaha* of Anuruddha.[62] Indeed, substantial contribution to Theravada Buddhist literature had started before Chappada. The best-known among these is the Saddaniti, which Aggavaṃsa completed in 1154. Uttarajiva gave a copy of this work to the bhikkhus of the Mahavihara in Sri Lanka and it "was received with enthusiastic admiration, and declared superior to any work of the kind written by Sinhalese scholars." The *Saddaniti* is still used as a teacher's guidebook in the monasteries in Myanmar. It is one of the three principal Pali grammars along with the grammars by Kaccayana and Moggallana. Pali scholars consider the *Saddaniti* as the greatest of extant Pali grammars. Aggavaṃsa was also the royal teacher of King Narapatisithu (1167-1211 CE) and carried the title Aggapandita. Chappda, another famous scholar from Bagan, worked on grammar, Vinaya and *Abhidhaṃṃa*. He wrote a commentary on Kaccayana's grammar and called it *Suttaniddesa*; he also produced commentaries on *Abhidhaṃṃa* known as *Samkhepavannana*, *Namakaradipani*, *Matikatthadipanī*, and *Patthanagananaya*. According to the *Piṭaka-thamain*, a history of Buddhism in Myanmar, he also devoted a commentary to the *Visuddhimagga* by Buddhaghosa called the Visuddhimagga-gaṇṭhi. Also reputed for his work at Bagan was Vimalabuddhi, who also wrote on Abhidhaṃṃa and Pali grammar. The Abhidhaṃṃatthasaṅgahatika is a commentary of Anuruddha's *Abhidhaṃṃasaṅgaha*, while his other work, *Nyasa*, is on Kaccayana's grammar.

The Tai

In addition to the Pyu, Mon, Rakhine and Myanmar, who had closer, direct contact with Indian civilization, there is another nationality of Myanmar, who were regarded by some as barbarian because they "were neither Indianized" nor "Sinified";[63] they are called Tai, who are known to the Burmese as Shan and to the Thai as Tai-yai. They were ethnically related to the Nanchao/Nanzhao who attacked Bagan. Theravada Buddhism practiced among the Tai had more connection with Sukhothai and Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai in Lanna. Indeed, the founder of Kengtung (also Jengtung/Kyaington), a princedom in the Eastern Shan State and that of the two old northern Thai kingdoms, namely Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai were the same person, Phya/Brya Mangrai (1239-1317 CE) (also spelled as Mengrai). Before he founded those kingdoms, King Mangrai "captured Lamphun and brought the kingdom of Haripunjaya", a Mon Kingdom, to an end.[64] With regard to this turn of the geo-political landscape when the Tai started establishing many principalities, Charles Keyes remarks:

> The collapse of the Mon kingdom of Haripunjaya is to be interpreted less as a product of military defeat of one people, the Mon, by another, the Tai, than as the emergence of a new historical tradition known as the Yuan [*Yoon* as pronounced in Burmese], which was the successor to both Mon (civilization) and Tai (barbarian) traditions . . . relationships between the northern Tai principalities and the Mon states of Lower Burma remained close after the Tai conquest of northern Thailand, and Mon monks continued to play very important roles in the spread of Buddhism under the Tai rulers of Chiang Mai. The Yuan cultural tradition . . . came to be the dominant cultural tradition of northern Thailand, of what is today the state of Kengtung in Burma, of parts of Yunnan in Southern Chian and of parts of northern Lao.[65]

Keyes attributes the success, mainly from the eleventh century, of the expansion of territories by the Tai-speaking people (Lao, Chiang Mai, Sukhothai, Ava and Shan States in Myanmar, Assam in India) not "simply to the products of political conflict between the Tai and the classic civilizations" but also to this ideology. . .Theravada Buddhism".[66] Historical and archaeological evidence shows that King Mangrai was a "staunch supporter" of Buddhism. Among the Buddhist monuments he built was Wat Chiangman Monastery in the northeast corner of the modern city of Chiangmai.

The first introduction of Theravada Buddhism, the Padaeng Chronicle says, as practiced in Martaban among the Mon, was to Kengtung via Chiangmai at the beginning of the eleventh century CE by Sumana Mahathera (1030-1110 CE). This suggests that when King Mangrai established Kengtung, there had already flourished Theravada teachings among the people. Just as King Ramkhamhaeng of Sukhothai had adopted Khmer writing, the monks coming to Sukhothai to propagate Buddhism in Kengtung also used Khmer-based Sukhothai scripts. Here, it should be noted that long before the founding of Chiang Mai in 1296 the northern part of Thailand with an increasing population of Tai speaking people had prospered as a part of the Mon Kingdom, Dvaravati and Haripunjaya. As Keyes argues, Tai, (of which the Thai and Shan belong) had been moving into the area of central mainland South-East Asia, "steadily and slowly" well before the eleventh century, perhaps since the seventh century, there was most probably a substantial Tai-speaking population living in the domains of the Mon-Buddhist kingdom of Dvaravati.[67]

The second introduction or revival was by some Sukhothai monks led by Naṇagaṃbhira who went to receive re-ordination and training by Surinda Mahathera of Rohana Janapada in Ceylon in 1419 CE where he learnt the correct recitation of the natticatuttha kaṃṃavaca, a subject of controversy back in Kengtung for some time. The Padaeng Stone Inscription dated 1451 CE, written in the Ramkhamheang old Thai scripts, record the second arrival of Theravada Buddhism in the form of the forest dweller's tradition from Sukhothai (1238-1438 CE). As can be expected, the Padaeng Chronicle blames Sumana Mahathera (1030-110 CE) for everything that went wrong before that. From Ceylon and then Ayuthaya, Nanagambhira arrived back in Chiang Saen in 1434 CE. Here a monastery called Wat Padaeng (Red Forest monastery) was built for him by the Braya, local chief. The Wat Padaeng Monastery in Kengtung was a branch of Wat Padaeng in Chiang Saen.

Theravada Buddhism among the Tai was known as *yon* (*yuan*) *gaing*, "the Yon Fraternity", derived from the word *Yonaka*, the name of one of the nine Asoka missions. The Yon fraternity in Chaing Mai produced some learned monks who compiled works in Pali as well as in the vernacular language. The *yon gaing* is widely practiced throughout the Tai population in the present Myanmar although it is no longer represented as a separate sect at the current composition of the Myanmar saṅgha. Naṇasaṃbhara Mahathera (1924-2008), the late abbot of Piṭaka Teaching Monastery in Panglong where the headquarters of the Tai saṅgha is situated, was ordained in the yon gaing in his native town of Langkhor in central Shan State. He was one of the top monastic judges in Myanmar and was also the leader of the Tai saṅgha until his death.

Today, in the Shan State of the Union of Myanmar, apart from the Shan and the Tai, there are other nationalities who have also been practitioners of Theravada Buddhism for centuries. They include the Dhanu, Intha, Pa-o and Palaung: the first two speak Burmese dialects while the latter speak a Tibeto-Burman and Mon-Khmer dialect. The size of the population of these four nationalities may be estimated at nearly two million. Besides, in the Karen and Mon States of Myanmar there is another important nationality called Karen, estimated to number around 7% percent of the whole population, bigger than that of Rakhine and most of whom are adherents of Theravada Buddhism. It is believed Theravada Buddhism among the Karen has been influenced by the Mon. In any case, while each has a sizeable number of the saṅgha, with many flourishing monasteries in their own areas, deeply immersed in both teaching and practice, little about the history of Theravada Buddhist culture among the devout Buddhists of Dhanu, Intha, Pa-O, Palaung and Karen has been documented.

General Features of Buddhism in Myanmar before the British Annexation:

Monastic, Royal Patronage and Education

The general features of Buddhism in the history of the Union of Myanmar can be understood through three elements: as a monastic religion, as a source of state patronage, and as an educational institution. By monastic religion we mean that the saṅgha was (and still is) at the heart of the Buddhist religion for two reasons. First, "Buddhists have traditionally believed that for a layman to attain salvation is virtually impossible",[68] that there are more hurdles for layman who lives in a sensual world (*kamabhogino,*[69] *rajopatho*[70]); that in contrast, the life of a "renouncer" is free as an open space,[71] with sufficient time devoted to achieving Enlightenment. A layman, for his part, takes responsibility for providing the material needs of the monks, whom he sees as a fertile soil in which to grow the seed of his generosity, in the belief that his action will accumulate for him the merit necessary not only for betterment in *samsara,* the circle of life, but also help him ultimately to achieve *nibbana*. In return for his generosity, the monk teaches him the basic moral teachings of the Buddha and ways to improve his *kaṃma*. Second, "the Order preserves the scriptures", usually considered synonymous with the Doctrine.[72] The profession of maintaining the Doctrine has given the Order an unparalleled position in the history of the Buddhist world. It is believed that the need to study and safeguard the Doctrine was emphasized by the Buddha himself, who said that if the monks did not engage in study and teaching, the result would be the disappearance of the *Saddhaṃma* (true Doctrine).[73] And the Order has taken this task very seriously.

Royal patronage has been so crucial, for better or for worse, for the Buddha-sasana in Myanmar. The rulers saw it as their duty to use temporal power to protect the *Buddhasasana,*[74] sometimes purging insincere monks or preventing them from exploiting the Order and the generosity of devotees[75]. At Hamsavati (1287-1539 CE), for example, a Mon king, Dhaṃmaceti (1472-1492 CE), himself an ex-monk, sent twenty-two monks to "Sihaladipa" [Ceylon]. . ."to receive at their hands the *upasampada* ordination in the *udakukkhepasima* consecrated on the *Kalyani* river, where the Fully Enlightened One enjoyed a bath".[76] On their return, the king had all the old chapter halls, *Sima*, re-consecrated and all other monks in his Ramanna kingdom re-ordained in the "pure form of the *Sihala-upasampada* ordination".[77] Altogether 15,065 monks were re-ordained.

The kings also supported the *saṅgha* with material requisites, and led the people in merit-making, in order to instil Buddhist morality. In his two royal orders, dated February 20, 1782, a month after ascending the throne, and March 10, 1782, King Bodawpaya spelled out his moral concerns to the people, asking them to observe the Five Precepts. Mindon encouraged lay people to observe *uposatha-sila* (eight/nine/ten precepts) on four uposatha-days each month" [78] It has been noted by many that most of the celebrated pagodas and monasteries throughout the country were built by kings.[79] The king and other wealthy donors donated lands and slaves for the maintenance of the pagodas and monasteries.[80] In ancient Pyu, Mon, Rakhine, Myanmar and Shan territories only the king and some members of the royal family had the authority and resources to donate a complete set of the *Tipiṭaka* because "a copy of the *piṭaka* was more costly than erecting a hollow pagoda. In fact for less than one and a half times the cost of the *piṭaka* a big monastery with 'flame pediments' could be built".[81] The king also asked the people, sometimes by order, to look after the monasteries and feed the monks.[82]

However, sometime the connection with the rulers had its downside. The royal preceptor was more than a spiritual teacher to the king. He was also one of the very important advisors to the monarch on religious and temporal affairs. In the history of Myanmar, it was kings and not the monastic order who appointed a monk to that position of *sayadaw*, meaning "royal teacher", which was known in later periods also as *thathanapaing*, supreme of patriarch". Usually a monk who had taught the monarch before he ascended the throne was appointed to this powerful position. One can therefore see the affairs of the saṅgha being linked to the royal succession problem. The political power of the king could also be abused by rival fraternity as in the case of controversy between the one-shoulder and both-shoulder robbing during the late Ava and early Konbaung periods. Both sides won under different reigns when they could persuade the monarch to back their position. By being close to the ruler, the *sayadaw* and through him the saṅgha could be inadvertently dragged into politics as we saw during Mindon's reign.

In general, the royal patronage was to support the monastic order as both the spiritual focus of society as well as an educational institution. Learned monks would usually be invited to live in the capital, where the king could support them and at the same time benefit from their service; it was one of those monks that the king usually appointed to the post of *sayadaw,* royal tutor. Indeed, providing education for society was the major means of recruitment into the Order as ordination was a prerequisite for higher study. Shin Mahasilavaṃsa, a poet monk at Ava in the reign of Narapati (1442-1468 CE), recorded this tradition in his work[83] stating that some of the students were residential while others came to classes only during the daytime. After one or two years those in residence were ordained. Many spent a few years in the Order studying, and then left. This temporary ordination became a part of Burmese Buddhist culture.

Entrance into the Order for those seeking education, rather than salvation, as their immediate goal, forced monasteries to include in their curriculum subjects which were not directly related to attaining *nibbana,* which were to become known as secular subjects (*lawki phinnya* in Burmese). The point here is that the *Saṅgha* had had to redefine their curriculum. The aim was now not only to educate those who wished to free themselves from suffering but also those who had a worldly motive. The Order did well before the end of the nineteenth century: it produced a curriculum for general education that took account of the needs of both the Order and society. In essence, this curriculum included lessons or texts on basic moral and monastic training as well as on vocational subjects current at the time. This type of curriculum was designed and modified by individual abbots to suit the needs of their students, and never adopted nationally, despite similarities in curriculum between monasteries. The syllabus included a devotional formula; accounts of the Buddha's eight victories; some selected *suttas*; *Lokaniti; Paritta;* rules and regulations for *samanera*, "novices"; the *Jatakas*; and three further texts considered to be essential for the study of the *Tipiṭaka.*

A devotional formula was generally known as *awkatha* (Pali, *okasa*) because it always began with the word *awkatha.* The word *okasa* in the Pali canon has several meanings, including "permission",[84] which was adopted in this formula. Permission was asked by one who recited the *awkatha* from the Triple Gem, namely the Buddha, the *Dhaṃṃa* and the *Saṅgha.* The devotional formula was also called *paya shikho* (worship of the Buddha) because that was how the Burmese *worshipped* the Buddha. Contained in the formula are a request for forgiveness from the Triple Gem for unmindful actions; praise of the Buddha; paying homage to the Triple Gem; and an expression of wishes by the worshipper, in which he usually asks to be freed, by virtue of his humility and devotion, from all the woeful states.

The *awkatha* was usually in Burmese and ran from half a page to a full page. But, in addition, a learned teacher might teach his students another formula in Pali, always in verse, for instance, the famous *namakkara* gathas and the *saṃbuddhegatha*. While the *namakkaragathas* run to seven pages in thirty-three verses,[85] the *saṃbuddhegatha* is only one verse. They were composed locally by eminent monks. The *awkatha* was recited by every Burmese every time he paid homage to the Buddha or observed the Five Precepts. This tradition is alive and is unique to the Burmese.

Next, the student learnt by heart two texts from the Pali canon, the *Maṅgala-sutta* and the *Sigalovda-sutta,* before learning their meaning as expressed in a few Burmese poems.[86] The learning of the *Maṅgala-sutta* must have been very significant, as parents usually celebrated the day their son began the *sutta* and the teacher would choose an auspicious day for it.[87] Then the student would be taught the *Sigalovada-sutta,* in which the Buddha gives advice to a young man, Sigala. In this *sutta*, usually taught only in Burmese, the Buddha explained what was actually meant by worshipping different directions: the way to worship different directions was to fulfil one's duty and responsibility towards different people in society.[88] After this, the student had lessons on the *Lokaniti*, a text composed by a minister, Anantasuriya Amat, during the Pagan period dealing with "prudential rules and principles of morality".[89]

Then the rules and regulations for a *samanera*, novice, called in Burmese *shin kyint wut*, were taught. S*hin kyint wut* is a collection of rules from the *Mahavagga* of the *Vinaya-piṭaka* and is basically an equivalent for the *samanera* to the *Patimokkha*;[90] the seventy-five rules on decorum (*sekhiya*); and the fourteen communal rules (*khandakavatta*). There have been many versions of *shin kyint wut*. Among those currently in use the most comprehensive was written by Shwegu Sayadaw in Pegu in 1956. This version, reprinted fifty-seven times in forty-eight years, explains all the rules with the help of not only the whole *Vinaya-piṭaka* but also the various *Vinaya* traditions.[91] Following the *shin kyint wut* was the *Paritta*, a set of eleven discourses selected from various Pali *Nikayas*. The *Paritta* was memorized only in Pali; its *nissaya* and meaning were not studied, except those of the *Maṅgala-sutta*, which we have already discussed. The study of the *Paritta*, used to ward off evil and bring blessings on appropriate occasions, was intended to train the students to perform rituals once they were ordained.

The *Jatakas* also formed part of the syllabus in many monasteries. Since the fifteenth century onwards there have been numerous works on the *Jataka*. At Sagaing, Ariyavaṃsa wrote in Pali a guide to its study, the *Jatakavisodhana*.[92] But from the seventeenth century, the it came to be studied in the vernacular language. At Ava, Taung-bi-lar Sayadaw wrote a commentary in Burmese verse (*byo*) on the *Vessantara-Jataka*. Thalun's successor, King Pindale (1648-1661), had some 430 *Jataka* painted at a pagoda at Sagaing in 1649.[93] The king ordered that the captions for the paintings were to be written in four languages, "Burmese, Mon, Shan and Yon (Lanna Thai) so that the paintings would please them when they came to the pagoda".[94]

Those who continued their study would then be taught some of the important texts, three altogether, Kaccayana's Pali grammar, the *Abhidhaṃmatthasaṅgaha* and the *Patimokkha*. Kaccayana's grammar was to provide a good knowledge of Pali grammar, while the *Abhidhaṃmatthasaṅgaha* was to give him a summary of the *Abhidhaṃma-piṭaka*. The *Patimokkha,* on the other hand, was taught as a preparation for the *Vinaya-piṭaka*. At the end of this course, the student might choose to follow entirely the canonical texts and their commentaries, known as *kyan-gyi,* "great texts", because of their numerous volumes as well as their importance; or he might choose to focus equally on these great texts and some secular subjects. The latter option might be taken by students who intended to pursue a career at the royal court, if they were to leave the Order at the end of their higher study, mostly aged between twenty-three and twenty-five.[95]

Secular subjects taught at the time were included astrology, medicine, mathematics, magic and law[96] in selected monasteries. For instance, the Lokuttara Kyaung in Taungoo during the Ava period[97] and the Bagaya Kyaung at Amarapura[98] during the Kon-Baung period were two of the few institutions where such specialised subjects were available. Men with expertise in these subjects were in such great demand at the royal court that even if they were in the monkhood, their service would still be required by the king.[99]

Another type of curriculum was for those who were more committed to the religious life, focusing entirely on the *Dhaṃma* and *Vinaya.* The aim was to have every single piece of information from the *Tipiṭaka* at their fingertips after an average of ten years' study. Their main concern was to go through every sentence of the Pali *Nikayas* known as "great texts", and consulting information from different parts of it. Students usually studied a text several times, under either the same teacher or a different one, until they mastered it. This method of study offered no formal qualification and no formal assessment. A student's qualification was measured by his tutor when the latter asks him to help teach some basic texts to his juniors; or he might write or be asked to write a book[100] and sometimes a commentary in Pali on any text he saw fit or one chosen by his teacher;[101] or he might be asked to preach on full moon days.[102] The result of this method of teaching is expressed through the ability to use the teachings independently. The teachers, especially those who were reputed for teaching the great texts, were often requested by the king to reside in the capital, where the king and his ministers could look after their material needs. Lessons on the great texts were therefore mostly available only in the capital. But despite such strong royal patronage, abbots were in total control of the administration and also of education in their monasteries: they selected their own candidates for ordination and designed their own syllabuses. There was total academic freedom on the part of the teachers.

Besides the linguistic division as discussed earlier, in the saṅgha of Myanmar there has also been, just as in Sri Lanka from the first century BCE,[103] a separation between two vocations, *gantha-dhura*, "vocation of books" and *Vipassana-dhura*, "vocation of meditation". Despite the emphasis on meditation in early Buddhism, "it was decided that learning was the basis of the *sasana*, and not practice." The number of monasteries, libraries and schools dedicated to the monks following the "vocation of books", for instance in Bagan, suggests that they were more numerous than those following the "vocation of meditation", usually taken to refer to the forest-dwellers. In an inscription dated 1236 CE "a donor built five school buildings for students and a monastery for the thera in one compound".[104] Another inscription mentions that seven years later, in 1243, the queen "built as many as twenty monasteries encircling a hollow pagoda, a library, a monastery and a hall of law, and dedicated three hundred *pay* of land, thirty slaves and fifty cattle for students of the Most Reverend Vinayadhara".[105] And there were many other donors who also supported the students in this way.[106]

Meanwhile the forest-dwellers, *canaran,* at Pagan, were by no means living as recluses.[107] Instead, they had monasteries of their own "with hundreds of monks living in them under *taw mlat kri,* the Most Reverend Lords of the Forest".[108] They also received donations from the royals, who provided servants and lands to them.[109] During the Bagan period the majority of the forest-dwellers lived in areas far away from Bagan, such as Minnathu, Pwazaw, Myinmu and Monywa, where there were centres of forest monasteries. But "some of them" also lived in Bagan.[110] The forest-dwellers at Pagan were also known as *panthaku* (*pamsukula*) *gaing* or the fraternity of ragged robes.[111] At Pagan, the forest-dwellers were powerful only under King Alaungsithu (1112-1167 CE); otherwise the village-dwellers were dominant.

However, during the periods of Sagaing (1315-1364) and Ava (1364-1555 and 1605-1752), there was a less clear distinction between the two professions of the monks, "books" and "meditation". Certainly it was no longer possible to state that the village-dwellers followed "the vocation of books" and the forest-dwellers that of "meditation". From the Ava period onwards a particular lineage would usually trace its roots to more than one tradition of ordination, and often its roots might go back to both professions.[112] The convergence of the two vocations is described by some as one of the "type[s] of adjustive mechanisms" through which interaction took place between different monastic lineages over the centuries.[113] Here, to illustrate the cross-over between the two vocations, there is a famous story of two monks. In Sagaing, there was a famous forest-dweller, Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw, also known by his ordained name, Shin Jaṃbudhaja, whose *nissayas* on the *Vinaya-piṭaka* and its commentaries are still in use today.[114] One of his contemporaries was Taung-bi-lar Sayadaw, also known by his ordained name as Munindaghosa and by his title, Tipiṭakalankara, for his fame in learning.[115] The encounter between these two learned monks tells us about the fusion of the two vocations. It is said that Taung-bi-lar Sayadaw visited Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw at his forest hermitage on the Sagaing Hills and saw the latter sweeping the compound of a pagoda nearby. Not knowing who the sweeper monk was, the former asked to meet Shwe Oo Min Sayadaw to consult him over a work on the *Vinaya* that he, Taung-bi-lar Sayadaw, was in the process of writing.

On learning just a while later who the sweeper monk was, Taung-bil-lar Sayadaw introduced himself and found that both of them had been ordained on the same day. Shwe Oo Min himself had been a village-dweller and indeed a royal tutor. Taung-bi-lar was now the royal tutor. Upon learning in subsequent discussions that Shwe Oo Min was writing a commentary on the same work and that it seemed to be of a better quality, Taung-bi-lar stored his own version away in a purpose-built pagoda, without making it available to any reader. He did so in honour of Shwe Oo Min.[116] Soon, "weary perhaps of royal viharas", Taung-bi-lar Sayadaw "withdrew to the *tiriyapabbata* to live in the quiet of the forest".[117]

The division that arose within the saṅgha, however, was based not just along the division of the two vocations nor linguistic identity. Sometimes it was due to the disagreements on vinaya points, especially concerning lavish offering from the royal patrons as happened to the first *Sinhalasaṅgha* in Bagan; sometime the political instability in both Bagan and succeeding kingdoms caused the establishment of new capitals.

An illustration from the reign of Bodawpaya may make this point clear. When Bodawpaya appointed Nanabhivaṃsa (1752-1831) for his unquestioning loyalty, the move caused discord within the ecclesiastical hierarchy, namely the *thathanapyu sayadaw* and the *vinayadhara sayadaws*, some of whom were not only sacked but also forced to disrobe. Upon his appointment, many monastic establishments boycotted Nanabhivaṃsa, and they became known as the *visabhaga* group, while the monastic establishments which continued to associate with Nanabhivaṃsa were called the *sabhaga* group. *Visabhaga* is a technical term in the *Vinaya*, denoting "monks who were not in association with each other through their refusal to participate in a Patimokkha ceremony"; *sabhaga* is the opposite. It seems the king wanted to make sure that no disassociation or boycott was supported by any of the *sayadaws* and accordingly made them promise that they would be "in *sabhaga* with the Sayadaw [Nanabhivaṃsa]". However, a year after the appointment of Nanabhivaṃsa as *thathanapaing*, in March 1788, one of the *vinayadharasayadaws*, Taung Lay Lon, rescinded his promise and joined the *visabhaga* group. His move angered the king, who prohibited people from supporting Taung Lay Lon Sayadaw and his two monastic establishments. The order reads: "No one shall visit or support with requisites the Taung Lay Lon phongyi [monk], *Taung lay Lon Taik* and *On-In Taik*. Anyone who visits or makes donations to them shall have his feet cut off."[118] But this ban was lifted the next day at the request of Nanabhivaṃsa.[119]

However, the discord between Nanabhivaṃsa and the *visabhaga* monks continued for another seven years until Bodawpaya forced all the *visabhaga* monks to leave the Order. Their leader, Kyaw Aung San Htar Sayadaw, who was not a member of the *vinayadhara*, and all the *visabhaga* monks, were falsely accused by the king of having been bogus monks. Part of the king's order reads: "Kyaw Aung San Htar Sayadaw and the *visabhaga* [monks] have no *nissaya* [teacher] and *upajjhaya* [preceptor] but pretend to have them, and thus claim to be *yahan*, although they are not. They should not be in the monkhood. Kyaw Aung San Htar and all *visabhaga* monks must be disrobed."[120] Resorting to this desperate measure, the king, in his attempt to get rid of monks showing any sign of dissent, shows how divisive his approach was towards the saṅgha and its education.

Contrary to the king's claim, Kyaw Aung San Htar Sayadaw's monastic lineage was well-known; his teacher and preceptor, the first Kyaw Aung San Htar Sayadaw, or Nanavara (1705-1753), was the *thathanapaing* during the reign of Mahadhaṃmarajadhipati (1733-1752). Since the death of his teacher, Nanavara, in 1753, Kyaw Aung San Htar Sayadaw, or rather the second Kyaw Aung San Htar Sayadaw, had become the leader of the Kyaw Aung San Htar scholarly tradition and had lived through the reigns of Alaungpaya and his successors up to Bodawpaya.[121]

Despite being the subject of boycott by the saṅgha for his unquestioning loyalty to the king, Nanabhivaṃsa, apart from his connection with the king's former tutor, was a very learned monk. At twenty-five he wrote a sub-commentary in Pali on the *Silakkhandhavagga*, the first thirteen *suttas* of the *Digha-Nikaya*.[122] He composed many other works in both Pali and Burmese, and two of his pupils, *thathanabaing* U Neyya and the author of the *Sasanavaṃsa*, Pannyasami, were to become famous in the next reigns. And it was during his tenure as the *saṅgharaja* that Ambagahapitiye Nanavimala of the Ambarukkharamaya at Valitara and five novices from Ceylon arrived in 1800 at Amarapura "with the aim of obtaining higher ordination".[123] Nanabhivaṃsa ordained them, gave them proper training and also, on their return, many texts no longer available in Ceylon. However, for some reason not documented anywhere, Nanabhivaṃsa left the Order in 1814 and served Bodawpaya as a minister, with the title Yazathingyan Amat. He was to lead a commission of learned men and monks in compiling the now famous Burmese chronicle, *Hamnnan Yazawin*, in 1829 at the request of King Bagyidaw (1819-1837).

However, collaboration between the ruler and the saṅgha has benefited both Buddhism and the nation. For example, King Mindon (1853-1875) needed help from the Buddhist clergy in his attempts to rein in corrupt officials,[124] for "the monks. . .were occasionally the only checks on the tyranny and exploitation of powerful officials".[125] In this regard, the provincial saṅgha governors wielded enormous power in the provinces under their control. They often confirmed the royal appointment of *myothugyi* (administrative head of a town) and *ywathugyi* (village headman), and in certain cases the saṅgha leaders in a province would request the king to appoint their chosen candidates to those positions. Every three months the provincial ecclesiastical governors reported directly to the king on both religious and political affairs in the provinces. Those powerful saṅgha leaders, using their moral and social status, also intervened on behalf of the people, ensuring their safety and the fair and just taxation, for instance, in 1859 and 1873, convincing the king to return to their owners the lands which had been confiscated for the army in Mandalay and Meikhtila respectively.[126]

Other selected examples of beneficial cooperation between the rulers and the saṅgha are the holding of two successful Buddhist councils, sangayana, now known as the fifth Buddhist Council (1871) and the Sixth Buddhist Council (1954-1956). The first was held in the then capital, Mandalay and lasted five months and three days with all the Pali canonical texts and their commentaries recited, inscribed on both palm-leaves and 729 marble slabs, now preserved in the Kuthodaw Pagoda in Mandalay, by 2,400 bhikkhus and some learned officials.[127] The second took place for two years under the democratically elected government of Prime Minister U Nu in Yangon, marking the 2,500 years of Buddhism after Mahaparinibbana, or the 2,545th anniversary of the Buddha's enlightenment, reviving Theravada Buddhism not just in Burma but also in the world after the most destructive world war (1939-1945) the Buddhist world as a whole has ever gone through. Two thousand five hundred Theravada bhikkhus from Burma (now Myanmar), Siam (now Thailand), Laos, Cambodia, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Vietnam, India and Pakistan (i.e. East Pakistan, now Bangladesh), but overwhelmingly from Myanmar, took part, the first time in the history of Buddhism when a *sangayana* was held internationally. The Pali canonical, commentarial and sub-commentarial texts were edited, each supervised by Burmese, Sri Lankan and Thai saṅgha, resulting in the agreement of a new version of the Tipiṭaka called *Chatthasangayana* and boosting the confidence of Buddhists worldwide.

Indeed, the founding in Myanmar of an association of Theravada Buddhist universities and colleges in 2007, marking 2,550 years of Buddhism after the Mahaparinibbana can also be seen in the same light, albeit on a smaller scale, as the fruit of collaboration between the sangha, the rulers and the people. The Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities (ATBU) (www.atbu.org) has twenty member-institutions from Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Lao, Cambodia, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and India. The ATBU has met for the second time in 2009 and will do so again in November 2011 to collaborate on academic matters.

With regard to the administration of the saṅgha in Myanmar, the main management has been the responsibility of the abbot. However, until 1885 there were ecclesiastical offices such as *thathanapaing* and *vinayadhara* (ecclesiastical judge). From the Bagan period, the power and position of *thathanapaing,* who also occupied the position of the preceptor of the king, were increasing.[128] Every monarch had at least one learned monk as his tutor to advise him on educational and religious affairs. Shin Disapamokkha in the reign of the last king of Bagan, however, advised the king also on political affairs and was despatched to China by the king on a peace mission.[129] An ambitious king might appoint more than one tutor. At Ava, King Thalun had at least five tutors: Taung-bi-lar Sayadaw of Ava, already mentioned, and Shin Ariyalankara from Sagaing, Shin Nandadhaja, Anuruddha Sayadaw and Bamei Sayadaw,[130] a Mon monk who had fled to Ava and was so knowledgeable in astrology and magic that the king invited him and his eleven pupil-monks to march with him on all his military expeditions. The *vinayadhara* was an ecclesiastical judge, usually a senior monk, well-versed in the *Vinaya*. He was elected and authorized by the saṅgha to decide on disputes among its members.

However, during the Konbaung period (1752-1885), the administration of the saṅgha became more organized, particularly at the highest level. Selected royal tutors were appointed to a newly-created council called *sudhaṃṃa. Sudhaṃṃa* had been the name of the royal religious hall (*zayat*) since the Ava period. At Amarapura, the fourth capital of the dynasty,[131] Bodawpaya appointed four *sayadaws* to the council in 1783. He called them *thathanahtein*, "the guardians of the *sāsana*".[132] He divided the kingdom into four territories and gave ecclesiastical jurisdiction in each to one of the *sayadaws,* calling for them to convene a meeting of the council to discuss matters that could not solved alone. While this concept of collective leadership through a *saṅghakamma*, "ecclesiastical act", had been the main characteristic of early Buddhist monasticism, such collective responsibility was new to the history of the *thathanapaing* in Burma. Two years later, on June 27, 1786, the king replaced the four-member *Sudhaṃṃa* Council with one *thathanapaing* when he appointed Gunamuninda to take charge of appointing *gaing ok* (ecclesiastical governor of a district) and *gaing dauk* (ecclesiastical deputy-governor) and of religious activities in the kingdom.[133] The same order also appointed twelve other *sayadaws* as *vinayadhara*, ecclesiastical judges.[134] However, in the following year, 1787, Gunamuninda was himself replaced by one of the twelve *vinayadharas*, Maung Taung Nanabhivaṃsa, who, as one of the eleven examiners of monastic examinations appointed in 1784, had been in charge of copying the *Tipiṭaka*.[135]

Mindon (1853-1878) revived the *sudhaṃṃa* council, consisting of a *thathanabaing* as its head and eight other members.[136] U Nyeya, known also the second Maung Taung Sayadaw, was appointed the *thathanapaing*.[137] After the *thathanapaing* died in 1866, Mindon did not appoint a successor. So the *Sudhaṃṃa* Council was in charge of the whole ecclesiastical administration until the next reign. Thibaw, the last king of Burma, appointed two *thathanapaings*, one for the new fraternity, the *Shwegyin-Nikāya*which came into existence in 1860, and the other for the majority, now called *Sudhaṃṃa-Nikaya*, a name derived from that of the royal religious office. However, only the *thathanapaing* for the *Sudhaṃṃa-Nikaya* agreed to be on the *Sudhaṃṃa* Council and thus became its head. Although the *Shwegyinthathanapaing* refused even the title of *thathanapaing,* he was nevertheless in sole charge of the *Shwegyin-Nikaya*, which he himself had founded.

The British colonial government (1885-1948) recognised no *thathanapaing* nor did it offer the traditional protection afforded by a Buddhist ruler,[138] and ended all support for the saṅgha. In addition, the judicial power of the *thathanapaing* was taken away.[139] That does not mean, however, that there were no saṅgha offices during the colonial period. The *thathanapaing* office continued to exist for a decade or so until the last *thathanapaing* died. The efforts by the saṅgha in Mandalay, the former capital, where influential monasteries existed, to elect a successor to the last *thathanapaing* was not successful because the saṅgha was divided into two sides, neither ready to compromise. But at the provincial level, succession of the ecclesiastical office holder went on although with a slightly modified method. The modification was that the saṅgha was now divided into different Nikayas and each Nikaya in the provinces would elect their own head of administrator, called *gaing-ok*, and one assistant, *gaing-dauk*. Those *gain-ok* and *gaing-dauk* were very influential as they made judgment on disputes, vinaya or dhaṃṃa, in their province. Because they were directly elected by the local saṅgha, it was more democratic; the office holders also knew and lived in the area. Although the colonial government did not recognize their authority, the existence of *gaing-ok* and *gaing-dauk* meant the saṅgha administration in the provinces was similar to when the Burmese Buddhist kings existed.

The saṅgha in Post-Independence Era

The most pronounced absence in newly-independent Burma was the office of the *thathanapaing*. In the absence of a centralized body of saṅgha administration, the first government of independent Burma led by Prime Minister U Nu, set out to coordinate with influential and leading members of the saṅgha who were famous for their learning (*pariyatti*) or meditation (*paṭipatti*). The sayadaws, famous for their learning, were mainly from Mandalay, Rangoon and Pakhokku. With their support, Prime Minister U Nu introduced a parliamentary act that would see some leading teaching monasteries upgraded to a Pali university status.

With this parliamentary act, U Nu's government showed its intent in providing state patronage and re-establishing the link between the state and the saṅgha. According to the 1950 Dhaṃmacariya and Pali University Act, any monastery that can produce ten dhaṃmacariya graduates within three years will qualify for Pali university status. Dhaṃmacariya degree examinations conducted by the government were held at that time in Mandalay and Rangoon. They were in fact introduced by the colonial government in 1946, based on the model of the Buddhist *nationalist* (*amyotha*) examinations that began just after the last king was dethroned and during the time when the British withdrew from giving any support to the saṅgha. So, the dhaṃmacariya degree examination traces its origin to the early anti-colonial movement. As the name goes, dhaṃmacariya means the master of the dhaṃma; anyone, mostly monks, who obtained this degree were considered proficient in Pali and Theravada Buddhist teachings.

What U Nu's government did was to encourage the monasteries which could teach at the dhaṃmacariya degree level to think of modernization. To do so, the government provided assistance for the lecturers. As giving a salary would not be appropriate, material support such as allowance for meals and robes were provided monthly for four lecturers in a monastery with a Pali university status. Besides this, an unlimited travel pass, valid for air, sea and land, was also given. The Dhaṃmacariya and Pali University Act also created a central examination board consisting of most learned monks from around the country. In addition to that, U Nu set up a Western-style Buddhist university where syllabuses would consist of critical study, research and modern languages. That university was created with the financial support from the Ford Foundation in the United States of America in 1954.

It was not until 1979 that the President of Myanmar, General Ne Win, brought together all sects of the saṅgha in the name of the purification, perpetuation and propagation of Buddhasasana (*thathana thant-shinh, ti-tant, pyant-pwah-yay*). The government, using its intelligence service and law enforcement agencies, cracked down on unruly elements within the saṅgha. It brought together forty-five, later extended to forty-seven, members of the saṅgha from different parts of the country to set an executive committee representing all fraternities (Nikaya). This body is called the State saṅgha Mahanayaka Committee and it is equivalent to the Supreme saṅgha Council in Thailand and runs religious affairs of Buddhists in Myanmar, concerning doctrine, education, administration and judicial matters. The executive body is divided into three groups, each overseeing the running of the saṅgha for four months a year. All the working members are stationed at the saṅgha headquarters in Yangon and go to work from 9am to 5pm. This highest executive body is also formed at many lower levels such as division, province, town and village but at the lower levels each Nikaya has its own saṅgha mahanayaka committee, which means it runs its own affairs.

At the national level, there are two other saṅgha bodies: the central saṅgha assembly of some 300 plus members functioning as a saṅgha parliament, and the representatives assembly of more than 2,000 members functioning as a grassroots association. These three national bodies (State saṅgha Mahanayaka Committee, the Central saṅgha Assembly and the saṅgha Representatives Assembly), as set out in the 1980 parliament's saṅgha Purification and Unification Act, were designed to mirror the political establishment when the nation was still under the rule of the Burma Programme Socialist Party (which ceased to exist in 1988). The new law imposes a limit on saṅgha division to nine *gaing* (sects), although how the number came to be nine is unknown until now. Some lineages were not permitted to exist separately but were instead made to integrate into the majority Sudhaṃma-Nikaya, while Mahasi meditation tradition itself was asked if it wished to exist separately.[140]

The present Myanmar saṅgha administrative system, despite the source of its original model, and when compared with other the saṅgha administration elsewhere in South and South-East Asia, does offer an opportunity for the saṅgha to strengthen the harmony of Theravada Buddhist beliefs, with the support of the state. The system is both more effective and democratic today. It is effective, because the system recognizes the continuation of various fraternities that exist in accordance with the dhaṃma and vinaya while bringing them under the same administration at the highest level. In other words, the saṅgha laws are made together by all fraternities while implementation is made by each fraternity on their own at the local level.

This effectiveness has seen the saṅgha coming together to take action against individuals or groups distorting the teaching of Theravada Buddhism. For example, in the early 1980s, a group called *luthe-lupyit* (Only Human) who rejected the authenticity of almost the whole Tipiṭaka, except a handful of sutta, and the existence of all realms but the human. This particularly powerful group of heretics followed the interpretation of a learned monk, Ukkattha who studied Sanskrit, Hindi and English in India. He was knowledgeable in religions and world affairs, with a keen interest in communism. He was seen as thorn in the flesh by the majority of the saṅgha. In 1961, under the U Nu government, members of the saṅgha from Rangoon formed a saṅgha court consisting of twenty-seven saṅgha judges who ruled that his belief and interpretation were not in accordance with the Buddha's true teaching. But with no central saṅgha administration in place and a weak government, the ruling by the saṅgha court had no effect. Around ten such groups including two meditation traditions, *Kyaungpan* and *Kayuk-thinbaw*, have been put on trial at the highest saṅgha court and banned. The ban is effective as the law of the land enacted by the government in 1980 requires the implementation of the ecclesiastical court ruling by the government's relevant law enforcement agencies.

It is democratic because each group of one hundred bhikkhus select a representative to the Representative Assembly, five members of whom send one of their own to the Central saṅgha Assembly. This dynamic selection method has been in operation with keen participation from the majority. Besides, no office is for life. After five years, a countrywide election is held. On the highest executive body, no member shall serve more than three terms, a crucial agreement not part of the original founding document but brought in lately by grassroots saṅgha bodies. In 2010, it was the first time the two highest positions, those of the chairman and the secretary-general of the State saṅgha Mahayanaka Committee, were filled by those who previously held no office within this powerful saṅgha Mahanayaka body, leading many observers to regard the event as the triumph for the grassroots. Before his election, the humble but learned chairman sayadaw, the Most Ven. Prof. Kumarabhivaṃsa was known for being independent and competent as a saṅgha highest court judge. He specializes in Pali and Abhidhaṃma, having taught the Patthana to most of the Tipiṭakadhara examinations candidates. He has written a Pali commentary to the Theri-apadana (published in 2009 by ITBM University, Yangon) and has translated Mahasi Sayadaw's two volumes instruction on meditation into Pali.

The Current Teaching of Buddhism in Myanmar

Now I shall briefly give an overview of the study and practice of Buddhism in Myanmar today. First, let me describe the challenges facing monastic education. The study of the dhaṃma in Myanmar shares some common characteristics with Sri Lanka and Thailand, two of the Theravada countries, and also has its own unique feature. For the saṅgha in Myanmar, the study of Buddhist scriptures is based on a two-hundred-years-old standardized syllabus, called *pathamapyan*. Apart from the *pathamapyan*, and unlike in Sri Lanka and Thailand where there are only centralized examinations, known as *nak dham* and *barian* in Thailand and *pirivena* education in Sri Lanka, there are in Myanmar many other Buddhist examinations for monks, novices and nuns in many provinces. Many of them follow similar syllabuses.

Historically, the trend in nearly all those examinations has been to promote a system that has the fewest successful candidates, as this is seen as producing the brightest; with the examinations board getting reputation as the most strict, thus the best. Historically speaking, it was King Thalun (1629-1648) who for the first time introduced examinations of scriptural knowledge for monks and novices when he decreed that "examinations be held every year in June or July to select royal candidates for ordination",[141] the reason for which was the decline of monastic discipline and scholarship and[142] the abuse of people's generosity by members.[143] In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the present South-East Asian nations were at war with one another, consolidating their empires. In Burma, then known as Taung-oo (Ketumati), the building of an empire began in the sixteenth century with the conquest of territories by King Tabin Shwehti (1530-1551), such as Bago (Hamsavati), Arakan (Dannyavati), the Shan States (Kamboja), Martaban, Prome and Ayutthaya.[144] He made the Mon capital, Pegu, the seat of his power. His brother-in-law and successor, Bayin Naung (1551-1581), attacked the Siamese empire of Ayutthaya, capturing Lanna, a principality of Ayutthaya.[145] However, in the reign of Nandabayin (1581-1599) many of the territories gained earlier were lost.[146] King Thalun (1629-1648) also faced a revolt when his first coronation took place at Bago in 1629, which must have contributed to his decision to move his capital permanently to Ava in 1635.[147]

Alaungpaya (1752-1760), the founder of the Kon-Baung dynasty (1752-1885) not only successfully drove out the Mon who only a few months earlier had overrun Ava, but within five years also conquered, indeed ended, the Mon kingdom of HaMsavati once and for all.[148] Alaungpaya then attacked Ayutthaya, the Siamese capital, a mission that was unsuccessful because of a shortage of food and other logistic supplies.[149] Indeed, it was during the Ayutthaya campaign that Alaungpaya was killed in 1760. His eldest son and successor, Naungdawgyi (1760-1763), continued his mission to subdue Ayutthaya, but it was his second son, Hsinphyushin (1763-1776) who ended the kingdom of Ayutthaya in 1767. Bodawpaya (1782-1810) took eight months to defeat his enemies inside and outside the capital[150] in April 1782, two months after assuming power, and started to organize his fighting forces, summoning all able-bodied men to centres where they were formed into units. This was because at that time there was no standing army. Fourteen months later, in June 1783, the armed forces consisting of more than two hundred officers, and 21,769 men, divided into thirty-one regiments and four divisions and three-quarters.[151]

It was in that context that in the Ava and early Kon-baung periods, some of the kings promoted the *pathamapyan* examinations. Bodawpaya took several measures to attract candidates to enter *pathamapyan* examinations, called at that time as *pathama sar taw pyan,* "excellent candidate for royal examination". The first of the measures was to appoint twelve examiners[152] in 1784 to examine only one candidate at a time. But some of the *sayadaws* may have also regarded the examinations themselves as unnecessary: many of them did not turn up. The king, therefore, on July 8, 1785, rebuked the *sayadaws* for being absent at the examinations, saying "the examinations are the affair of the *sasana*. I have heard that they did not come, even when summoned. Unless ill, do not evade the duty. It is the business of the *sasana*."[153] This decree is extraordinary for the two reasons: first, the king was making a point that formal examinations were "the affair" and "the business of the *sasana*"; second, the king was so desperate that he decreed that all the *sayadaws* must enter at least one pupil of their own for the *pathamapyan* examinations.[154]

Another measure designed to popularize the formal examination was to reward successful candidates for the examination[155] with materials and positions in the hierarchy which, according to King Bodawpaya, "was intended to benefit both teacher and pupil not only in this life but also in the next".[156] The requisites and the allowances increased with the level for which the candidate entered. At the intermediate *pazin laung* (higher ordination candidate intermediate) level, not only the parents but also the brothers and sisters of the candidate were exempted from royal service; and the candidate had twenty people to carry him and his belongings. For the higher *pazin laung* (higher ordination advanced) level, there were thirty attendants to carry him and his personal belongings, while seven generations of his relatives were elevated to royal status and given titles. A successful candidate would receive royal patronage for his ordination. After his ordination, he received certain allowances from the palace: a monthly food ration and a pair of robes annually.

Therefore, the real causes of this trend were to prevent able-bodied men from escaping conscription and forced labor in the construction of the capitals, which were moved often in those times. To expand and maintain the empire, King Thalun built up very large armies. In 1635, Thalun ordered his army to be increased by twenty times, from 20,000 to 400,000. The Myanmar historian, Than Tun, estimates the population of Burma under Thalun at two million. So one in five people were in the army.[157] The immense strain his policy placed upon the populace is beyond doubt. Thalun oversaw major reconstruction, at least in the first years. As soon as he came to power he caused monasteries to be built in Bago. Indeed, it was "the men in charge of building his monasteries" who "plotted" the first rebellion, during his first coronation. In 1635, as he moved his capital to Ava, Thalun also built a new palace there.[158] In every construction undertaken by the king, everyone except novices and monks was obliged to provide free labor. So, far from holding examinations every year as in his first decree to select candidates for ordination, King Thalun did not even allow any ordination service to take place from 1638 until the end of his reign in 1648. The formal examinations that did take place were, therefore, all held before 1638, and most certainly within three years, between 1636 and 1638, with the particular aim of purging monks from the monastic order.

While this original motive may no longer hold true, the mentality related to the least number of successful candidates still prevails widely, primarily among members of the saṅgha themselves who honestly believe that this is the way forward. The question papers are therefore set in a way that only few will pass. Faced with the unrealistically huge syllabus, all the teaching monasteries are helpless. Unfortunately, apart from the *pathamapyan* and *dhammacariya* examinations, other reputed boards such as the *tipiṭakadhara* examinations, the *sakyasiha* examinations in Mandalay, the *cetiyangana* examinations in Yangon, the increasingly popular examinations for *samanera* called *samane-kyaw* in Yangon, Mandalay, Taunggyi, Mawlamyaing-kyun, Bago and Myinchan, the *susamacara* examinations and the *pariyatti-saddhaṃmapala* examinations in Mawlamyaing all maintain this trend. This mentality has had devastating effect on the saṅgha's study of the Tipiṭaka. Getting a *dhaṃmacariya* degree takes much longer than it should; students have no time to study the canonical texts either during the examination-orientated study or afterwards.

Despite successive rulers' efforts to widen participation in the formal examination, the abbots were still not yet persuaded of the merit of examination. Even when ordered by the king, as we have seen, not many came forward to enter their pupils for the *pathamapyan*. Instead, they continued to ignore the *pathamapyan* examination and focused on the traditional method of education until the early twentieth century.[159] This was, the saṅgha believed, because studying for examinations that provided qualifications and worldly awards, would inevitably corrupt the young minds of the student-monks. Instead, the teachers, who were usually also abbots, created their own syllabuses based on their own specializations. Students could choose which teacher they went to for the study of a particular text, the main reason for the choice being the reputation of the teacher as a scholar. And it was normal for students to repeat more than once a certain text under the same or a different teacher.

This traditional study method came to be known as the "pakhokku method", as opposed to the "Mandalay method", which follows formal examinations in Mandalay. The pakhokku method is so-called because it has its last strong hold in Pakkhokku, a town in central Myanmar. The most important monastery in Pakkhokku, the Mahavisutarama, was founded in 1901, and within eight years of its founding, the number of students rose from fifty to three hundred.[160] It has since established many branches in Pakhokku as well as in other parts of the country. In 1980 it had branches in 123 towns and cities with over 2,200 teachers. But the pakkhokku method is under serious threat because without a higher certificate or a degree in Buddhist scriptures, awarded only through formal examinations, a bhikkhu cannot occupy a senior position in the Myanmar saṅgha any more. The government itself favours the formal examination-orientated method. Therefore, even monasteries following the pakkhokku method have to enter examinations.

The result of this is that no Pali text is likely to be studied unless it is part of an examination syllabus, forcing the State saṅgha Mahanayaka Committee, with government support, as recently as the early 1990s, to create, as if to confirm this trend, new degree syllabuses to cover the whole Pali Tipiṭaka in an effort to encourage monastic students to read texts not prescribed in the existing examinations. The Vinaya-piṭaka forms one degree syllabus and a vinayavidu degree is conferred upon the successful completion of a written examination. Other similar degrees are the Abhidhaṃmavidu, the DighaNikayavidu, the SaṃyuttaNikayavidu, the Aṅguttara Nikayavidu and the Majjhima Nikayavidu. These are in addition to the main written examinations of the *pathamapyan* and *dhaṃmacariya*.

Since 1948 when the country regained independence, there have also been attempts to bring modern critical study into monastic education at the university level in Myanmar. Unfortunately, the first of such institutions, saṅgha University, established just before the Sixth Buddhist Council in the early 1950s, was closed down about ten years after it was opened and not long after the military coup of 1962. However, from 1980, five saṅgha universities have been set up, three by the government and two by private initiative. Pariyatti Sasana Universities in Yangon and Mandalay came into existence as part of the measures for the purification and unification of the saṅgha in 1980, under government supervision, and with the financial support of the devout Buddhists around the country under the leadership of the late Tipiṭakadhara Sayadaw Vicittasarabhivaṃsa (1911-1992). Both introduced some critical study of the Pali Tipiṭaka and some extra papers as well as in English and Sanskrit, not usually available at traditional teaching monasteries. But because the study is conducted in Burmese, another institute, the International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University, was set up by the military government in 1999 to provide the teaching of Buddhism in English at the university level, where half of around 300 places are reserved for overseas students, ordained and non-ordained, Theravada and Mahayana. One of the two privately-run Buddhist universities is Sitagu International Buddhist Academy, established in Sagaing in 2000 by the Ven. Ashin Nyaniassara, the best-known preacher and a social activist monk, who acts as its chancellor. It offers teaching on the Tipiṭaka in English. The other, the Buddhist University, was set up by a retired professor of Sanskrit, Myint Swe, a graduate of London University. He conducts courses in Buddhist scriptures in Burmese and a good study program for Sanskrit and English is compulsory for all. Around 3,000 students study at these universities at any one time. There are no course fees, and food and accommodation are also provided free. The institutions are teaching-orientated and focus exclusively on Theravada Buddhism.

For the study of Buddhism among lay people, the Ministry of Religious Affairs sponsors the running of courses and conducting written examinations in December each year on the *Abhidhaṃṃatthasaṅgaha* (since 1952), the *Abhidhaṃṃatthavibhavini-tika* (since 1955) and the *Visuddhimagga* (since 1957) throughout the country. The study of *Abhidhaṃṃa* by the masses was initiated by Ledi Sayadaw in 1903 when he simplified the essence of *Abhidhaṃṃa* for laity in the vernacular language. In 2005 alone, there were 14,803 candidates sitting for different levels of *Abhidhaṃṃa* examinations and around 75% of them succeeded. Many *Abhidhaṃṃa* scholar-monks and laity have since formed several non-governmental Abhdihamma associations and contributed to the growth of *Abhidhaṃṃa* study among the masses. The Abhidhaṃṃa Association (est. 1906), the Abhidhaṃṃa Propagation Association (est. 1946), the Maṅgalabyuha (est. 1975), the Dhaṃṃabyuha Sasana-mamaka Association (est. 1989) are some of the more prominent ones.[161] The canonical Abhidhaṃṃa texts forming part of the syllabuses are the Matika-Dhatukatha, Yamaka and Patthana, which form also part of the *pathamapyan* syllabuses.

Nowadays, while it can still be said that Abhidhaṃṃa is studied only by the minority and mostly by adults who also learn the dhaṃṃa through popular sermons and monthly religious magazines, there are also summer Buddhist schools held in the monasteries throughout the nation for children up to fifteen years old who go to a nearby monastery to learn basic Buddhist moral teaching and chanting. This movement has now received government backing and the supervision of the highest saṅgha administrative body. Myanmar, unlike Sri Lanka, has no Sunday school for Buddhist children. Moreover, Buddhist moral lessons introduced in all schools in the early 1950s were removed from the syllabuses in the 1970s. Therefore, these summer schools, sustained mainly by local Buddhist organizations and monasteries, provide the only formal lessons in Buddhism for children. The summer Buddhist schools are conducted also in the Mon and Shan medium. This summer school campaign has been so successful that some of the monasteries in big cities accept only children who are prepared to ordain temporarily as novices and ten-preceptor nuns. So, many children, especially in Yangon and Mandalay, take temporarily ordination during their summer school vacation between March and May. Of course, temporary ordination among the adults goes on anytime of the year and the practice which is shared among Buddhists in South-East Asia, remains strong and is one of the ways the saṅgha instils Buddhist moral knowledge and practice into society. The popularity in girls' temporary ordination is perhaps unique to Myanmar.[162] This is possible, perhaps because there are more than 60,000 ten-preceptor nuns, called *thilashin*, who run their own teaching nunneries, many of which have dhaṃṃacariya degree holders as their abbesses. The nuns also select their own administration up to the district and division levels. But they have no equivalent of administrative body at the national level, where they come under the control of the monks. And, there is no bhikkhuni order in Myanmar; perhaps there has never been one.

Current Meditation Practice in Myanmar

As to the meditation practices in current Myanmar, there are more than a dozen in practice. They are Ledi, Mingun, Mahasi, Mogok, Monyin, Thei-ingu, Sunlun, Webu, U Ba Khin, Taungpulu, Pha-auk and Kani, all of which were either established or renewed in the twentieth century and are therefore contemporary. A meditation tradition is usually inherited but at the same time renewed by a successful meditator who decides to impart his experience to others. These traditions, while inheriting the wisdom of a certain meditation lineage of old, have come into existence with some substantial polishing in the personal experience of their founders.

Of those meditation teachers, Ledi Sayadaw (1846–1923) was also a scholar monk who compiled treaties in both Myanmar and Pali and began practicing meditation seriously only in his early forties. Ledi Sayadaw put his energy into achieving many things: he wrote about 105 books altogether, popularized the study of Abhidhaṃṃa among the laity as mentioned above; preached to people in various parts of the country to avoid beef-eating, which was extremely successful, and acted as consultant for Buddhism in Myanmar under the British. This was one of the reasons the number of direct followers of Ledi meditation tradition is much smaller than many others. Besides, Ledi Sayadaw seems to have practiced and taught a variety of meditation methods - but is better-known for meditation on elements (*dhatu*) - which may have been another reason why, despite his unrivalled reputation in Myanmar, not many Ledi meditation centres have been established in his name.

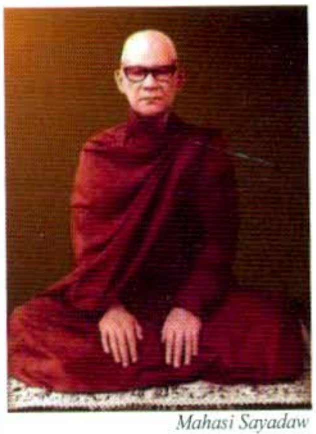
Among those following Ledi Sayadaw's teaching was U Ba Khin (1899–1971), the first internationally known lay meditation teacher from Myanmar. He, however, followed Ledi Sayadaw's instruction not on elements but mindfulness of breathing (*anapana*) which he learnt from one of Ledi Sayadaw's prominent students, Saya Thet Gyi, just before the Second World War. U Ba Khin started teaching formally from 1950 until his death. One of his pupils, SN Goenka (1924-) is one of the best-known meditation teachers today. At the basic level, *anapana* is practised for the first few days to develop samatha (concentration) which is then put into use in scanning and looking at the bodily sensation with equanimity, observing the reactions and changes.

One of the meditation teachers respected by U Ba Khin was Webu Sayadaw (1896–1977). Starting meditation diligently in his mid-twenties in solitude, and believed by many[163] including the Italian monk, Lokanatha, to be an arahant, Webu Sayadaw, a very diligent bhikkhu who "followed the ascetic practice of never lying down all his life",[164] taught awareness of breathing. This was to cultivate concentration to a sufficient degree through which one "automatically gains insight into the three characteristics of nature", impermanence, suffering and non-self.[165] He emphasized that "we should always be aware of the in-breath and out-breath" "while walking, working, doing anything".[166]

One of Ledi Sayadaw's junior contemporary Vipassana meditation teachers was Mingun Jetavan Sayadaw. He was credited with popularizing the *Satipaṭṭhana-sutta*, which offers the practice of fourfold mindfulness meditation. He began teaching meditation in 1911 in Mandalay but moved to Thaton in 1914 where he taught for more than forty years until his death. He was learned in Pali and wrote a Pali commentary on the *Milindapanha*. His method was to keep the practice intensive and continuous in retreat where noble silence is compulsory; the progress is measured through different stages of insight knowledge as in the Visuddhimagga. One of his students, with "a far-reaching effect on the practice of insight meditation in Theravada countries"[167] was Mahasi Sayadaw (1904–1982) who adapted the teaching and popularized the practice further with state support from Prime Minister U Nu's government soon after the country gained independence from Britain. As recorded in Nanapoṇṇika's *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, Mahasi's primary meditation focus on the rising and falling of the abdomen, rather than breathing, makes it distinct from Mingun Sayadaw's method, but by and large Mahasi Sayadaw retains Mingun Sayadaw's approach. The Mahasi Vipassana meditation is the only one of its kind to have been officially established under a government policy as "an exotic important, principally from Burma".[168] Mahasi also pioneered formalizing a prominent role for laity in running meditation centres. While all meditation teachers were monks, all the administrative decision was taken by the Sasananuggaha Association, a lay group established by the government of U Nu in 1949, just a year after Independence.[169] Well-known Vipassana meditation teachers in the West like Joseph Goldstein and Jack Kornfield (author of *Living Buddhist Masters*) have all studied with Mahasi Sayadaw. The Mahasi meditation centre has more than three hundred branches around the country and more than a million lay people are said to have practiced this tradition since its founding.[170] Best-known among Mahasi meditation teachers inside Myanmar include Sayadaw U Paṇḍita (1921-) (author of *In This Very Life*) and Chanmyay Sayadaw (1928-) (www.chanmyay.org), both of whom have traveled extensively to conduct retreats in the West as well as the East. "In Mahasi's system, [perhaps the only tradition to offer a thorough instruction on walking meditation] practice is continuous, alternating sitting and walking for sixteen hours a day".[171] In both Mingun Jetavan and Mahasi, each session is one hour and both use the technique of mental noting at the beginning.

One of the Vipassana meditation teachers who followed Ledi Sayadaw was, Mogok Sayadaw (1899-1962), also a contemporary of Mahasi Sayadaw. Mogok Sayadaw, initially known for his simplified Abhdidhaṃṃa teaching at Amarapura, before he escaped the war in the early 1940s and practiced meditation in a cave for four years in a town called Mogok, then part of the Shan Hills but now Mandalay Division,[172] emphasizes the awareness of breath as "home" (*ein the*) and the importance of intellectual understanding of the dharma, centred on removing the wrong view of eternalism (*sassata*) and nihilism (*uccheda*) at the very beginning to progress in Vipassana practice. The main Vipassana practice then focuses on the process of contemplation on minds and feeling, through which one discovers that all phenomena are but a process of arising and vanishing. All of his 269 centres and over 3,000 meditation groups[173] teach the Paticcasamuppada with a wheel-like diagram (*Pateiksathamotpard setwaing*) as their principal teaching material, with which the tradition came to be identified. The Mogok tradition has ninety-eight meditation teachers in their centres and like Mahasi they are managed by non-ordained trustees. Mogok Sayadaw left behind some 520 hours of meditation instruction which have been published as books and by 1998 some 600,000 copies have been sold.

Another contemporary of both Mogok Sayadaw and Mahasi Sayadaw, but with a much smaller number of centres in the country, was Monyin Sayadaw (1872-1963). As an Abhidhaṃṃa scholar, Monyin Sayadaw's approach was to first study the Abhidhaṃṃa analytical concepts of mind and matter and then apply them to meditation practice.[174] The meditator is taught to develop concentration in order to enable him to observe and then "microscopically examine" "the process of change in regards to all his body movement and postures" through which "the yogi develops understanding of impermanence through fleeting unsubstantive nature of his experience of all the physical and mental phenomena involved".[175]


Mahasi Sayadaw

Another reputed Myanmar meditation master, a contemporary of Monyin Sayadaw, was Sunlun Sayadaw (1878-1852), who, in contrast to his contemporaries had little learning of Buddhist scriptures nor any formal education. During the famine in 1919, he suddenly developed a strong fear of death and turned to the dhaṃṃa, first to charity and soon to meditation but he had no formal teacher. Instead, he started the practice first on awareness of breath and then the touch of breath on nostril until he attained one-pointedness. It is said that he received that knowledge from a mill clerk who had learnt it from Ledi Sayadaw. As a man with physical strength and determination, he faced and overcame intense unpleasant sensations. He is believed to have achieved arahantship and many learned monks on hearing of his reputation came to test him. Each time his answers were checked again and again with the Pali canonical texts and he was at last universally accepted in Myanmar. He instructed his students to intensely practice "the heavy breathing concentration exercise" for forty-five minutes and then "turn to mindfulness of sensation in the body", especially pain, sitting motionless for two to three hours: this has come to distinguish Sunlun practice from others.[176] Although there are not more than two or three dozen centres around the country, currently the Sunlun meditation tradition is the only one to count a monk who has completed the Tipiṭakadhara examinations among its meditation teachers.

Influenced by Sunlun Sayadaw was meditation master Thei-ingu Sayadaw (1912-1972), who could not read properly and was once a robber. After an injury during one of the robberies and upon hearing about meditation from his wife who started going to a Sunlun meditation centre, he began meditating on heavy breathing to develop concentration and then using it to observe intense pain. Like Sunlun Sayadaw, Thei-ingu Sayadaw is said to have achieved the first few stages of liberation, *magga*, before his ordination. In his teaching of awareness on breath, unlike Sunlun, no force is used in inhalation and exhalation, instead natural breathing is encouraged, not just the first forty-five minutes but throughout the sitting session. There are theirty-two Thei-ingu centres around Myanmar, with headquarters in a village near Hmawbi.

Kyaikhtiyo Golden Rock Temple

Taungpulu (1898-1981) was another pupil of Mingun Jetavan Sayadaw and a friend of Mahasi Sayadaw. He practiced the Satipaṭṭhana mindfulness meditation under Mingun Jetavan Sayadaw for three years and followed all the thirteen ascetic practices (dhutanga) all his bhikkhu life. While retaining the teaching on the fourfold mindfulness, Taungpulu Sayadaw included in his usual teaching mindfulness of the thirty-two parts of body. Much of his teaching is recorded in *Blooming in the Desert: Favorite Teachings of the Wildflower Monk Taungpulu Sayadaw* (1996, North Atlantics Books).

Pha Auk Sayadaw (1934-) is one of only two living founders of a well-known meditation tradition in Myanmar. With a dhaṃṃacariya degree in Theravada scriptures and a graduate of saṅgha University at Kaba-aye, Pha Auk Sayadaw studied meditation from revered masters in the 1960s before practicing as a forest monk for sixteen years. Sayadaw, who started teaching in 1983, guides his students thoroughly in both calm and insight meditations. Pha Auk is one of only two in Myanmar at present to teach *jhana* meditation, to give instruction on how to observe the many characteristics of the four elements before one is guided in insight meditation. Details of Pha Auk Sayadaw's teachings are recorded in his *Light of Wisdom* (1996, Kuala Lumpur) and the five-volume *Nibbana-gamini-paṭipada* (The Practice that Leads to Nirvana) (1998, Taiwan). In 2007 alone there were 130 bhikkhus from other countries among the 700 monastic populations. Sayadaw widely travels overseas offering teaching in several countries such as the USA, UK, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan and Sri Lanka. A forest tradition in Sri Lanka led by the Ven. Nauyana Ariyadhaṃṃa follows meditation guidance from Pha Auk Sayadaw who is one of the three founders of recent meditation tradition in Myanmar to have traveled and given teaching abroad, with the other two being Mahasi Sayadaw and Taungpulu Sayadaw. The Pha Auk meditation tradition has not established many centres but in about half a dozen or so that have been set up, the number of meditators, both local and foreigners, is much higher than centres belonging to other traditions and it is gaining an ever-increasing following abroad, especially in Australia, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Taiwan.

Another living founder of meditation tradition is Kani Tawya (Forest) Sayadaw, who is in his late 80s and also teaches *jhana* meditation. He is also known as Maung-htaung Myay-hsin Tawya Sayadaw and has at least three branches in both Upper and Lower Myanmar, with headquarters in Monywa.

Apart from these established traditions, there are individual meditation masters with their own centre and perhaps a couple of branches in various part of the country. Saya U Kyi, a lay meditation teacher who taught the Satipaṭṭhana meditation in the 1960s and 70s was one of them. His unique teaching is that one should observe sensation until all forms of it come to be perceived in the mind only as neutral feeling, upon which alone ultimate reality within the five aggregates can be discerned.[177] Indeed, he equates the observation of neutral feeling in its widest sense as the Buddha's middle path in practice. Another significant contributor in the development of Vipassana meditation in the last century was Kathitwaing Sayadaw, whose centre is in the village called Kathitwaing, seventy-seven miles from Yangon. A teacher of canonical and commentarial texts in Pakkhokku for twenty years, he started offering meditation instruction during the Second World War with an emphasis on mindfulness of three out of four elements (earth, wind and fire) through which the characteristic of unsatisfactory nature of life is to be investigated and realized. His branch in Bago, known locally as Aung Min Khaung Meditation centre, usually has the highest number of meditators in town.

Like all monasteries in Myanmar, all the meditations centres rely solely on the generosity of the devout for their daily upkeep. Novices and monks in the teaching monasteries go on daily alms-rounds, in most places walking in line down the street for their food in the morning. But in big cities like Yangon, Mandalay, Bago and Mawlamyaing, many monks and novices go individually into a few houses which they have been invited to receive food, thus developing a close relationship between the saṅgha and the family. The ten-preceptor nuns, known as *thilashin,*[178] however, go on alms-rounds not daily but once a week or a fortnight, and only to receive uncooked rice. They often do so from house to house during the whole day. Some of the offerings are sold in order to buy other necessary provisions. In teaching monasteries, breakfast is usually cooked in the monastery either by lay attendants or novices, with cooking materials stored in the monastery itself. Some large teaching monasteries with hundreds of students go to villages during the harvest where people offer them un-husked and uncooked rice for their breakfast throughout the year. Robes, even cars, are donated by the people. In the cities, buildings in both meditation centres and teaching monasteries are also offered by individual wealthy donors, but in villages they are usually built by the donations collected from the whole village. Meditation centres are by and large better supported financially than teaching monasteries because lay people come to have close connection with them through meditation whereas teaching monasteries dedicate themselves to their teaching routine and consider lay visitors as a distraction.

Conclusion

Today Myanmar offers a rich and varied source of Buddhist teachings and traditions which can be traced back at least to the second century CE. Buddhism is deeply rooted in the various national groups which compose the Union of Myanmar. The country has nurtured a rich and flourishing monastic community which provides a vehicle for the Buddha's teaching, and offers and supports a thriving programme of Buddhist education for both monks and lay people. Myanmar is the only Buddhist country where the whole Theravada Abhidhaṃṃa canonical texts are prescribed in various Buddhist examinations, for both the ordained and laity, conducted annually throughout the country. And, since 1914, more than one thousand meditation centres have emerged offering year-round programs in various parts of the country, following no less than a dozen different meditation traditions. Since the 1950s four of those meditation traditions, namely Mahasi, Taungpulu, U Ba Khin and Pha Auk, have been introduced to other countries. Many of those new meditation traditions have been designed for the laity and enthusiastically embraced by the Myanmar people and foreigners alike.

Notes

1 Mainly among the ethnic nationalities of Chin, Kayah and Kachin; many Karen are also Christian.

2 Mainly among the Bangladeshi immigrants and Rohingya ethnic group.

3 Mostly concentrated in the Indian and Nepalese communities.

4 Guillon, p. 104.

5 p. 82.

6 Pan Hla, p. XIII.

7 Known in Mon as Dagon before its conquest in 1752 by Alungpaya U Aung Zeyya who renamed it Yangon, pronounced by English speaking people as Rangoon, meaning "the end of enemies".

8 Malalasekera, p. 330.

9 Pranke, p. 131.

10 Guillon, p. 44; Standtner, p. 39.

11 Pranke, p. 131.

12 Ibid, pp. 137-8.

13 Schober , 1997:279-280.

14 Stargardt, p. 192.

15 Bischoff, pp. 11-12.

16 Stargardt, p. 192. See also, Stargardt "The Oldest Known Pali Texts … from Śr′ K·etra", *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, XXI (1995), pp.199-213; Finot "Un nouveau document sur le bouddhisme birman" *Journal Asiatique,* XX , 1912 and XXI , 1913; Duroiselle, "Excavations at Hmawza" *Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report,* 1926-1927, pp.171-181 & 1928-1929, pp.105-109; Lu Pe Win, "The Pali Text from Khin Ba-gon" *Report of the Superintendent of Archaeology,* Rangoon, 1940, pp.12-22.

17 Bischoff, p.15.

18 Ibid, p. 13.

19 Ibid, p. 16.

20 Moore, p. 140.

21 Ibid, p. 174.

22 Parker, p. 12; Bischoff, p. 16.

23 The Mon were earlier known to early European travellers in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries as Peguan, after the capital of the Mon Kingdom of that period, Pegu (Bago). The Mon were also know to the Burmese until recent times as *Talaing*, although this word has never been found in a Mon text, ancient or modern; and this term is considered "to be derogatory by the people to whom it applies". Guillon, pp. 17-18.

24 Coedes and Robert Halliday and C.O. Blagden cited in Guillon, p. 73.

25 Bischoff, pp. 10-11.

26 Briggs, p. 98.

27 Ibid, p. 2.

28 Moore, p. 148.

29 Ibid.

30 Also spelled as Pokam, Pukam and Pagan.

31 Maung Tin and Luce, pp.71-75.

32 Bischoff, p. 21.

33 Ibid, p.

34 Pranke, p. 135.

35 Bischoff, pp.

36 Than Tun, p.119.

37 Ibid, p.119.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid, p.119.

40 Stadtner: p. 23.

41 Bischoff, p. 23.

42 Stadtner, p. 24.

43 Luce, p.79.

44 Ibid, p. 25.

45 Bode, p. 14.

46 Stadtner, pp. 14, 54.

47 Ibid, p. 55.

48 Ibid, 14.

49 Stadtner, p. 12.

50 Ibid.

51 Stadtner, p. 66.

52 Duroiselle, *Epigraphia Birmanica*, II, Rangoon, p.38, cited in Than Tun, cit., p.56.

53 Stadtner, p. 26.

54 Ibid, p. 40.

55 Ibid, p. 70.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid, pp. 38-39.

58 Pranke, p. 149.

59 Ibid, p. 151.

60 Ibid, p. 150.

61 Than Tun, p.119 &*Kalyani Inscriptions*, pp.8-12.

62 Bode, pp.17-19.

63 Keyes, p. 74.

64 Ibid, p. 75.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid, pp. 25-78.

67 Ibid, p. 74.

68 Gombrich, p.9.

69 *Kamabhogi-sutta*, A v 177. See also A ii 6.

70 D i 63; *Sumangalavilasini* i 180-181.

71 *abbhokaso pabbajja*. Ibid.

72 Gombrich, p.9.

73 A iii 176-180.

74 Alaungpaya considered himself to have a "destined role of the defender of the faith. He had to do everything in his power to promote Buddhism as it was believed in Burma". Than Tun, "Introduction" *Royal Orders of Burma* (ROB), II, p.xvi.

75 ROB, VII, pp.i-ii.

76 *Kalyani Inscriptions*, p.19.

77 Ibid, p.34.

78 ROB, VII, pp.i.-iii; Kelatha, *Mandalay thathanawin* I, pp.69-70.

79 Yule, p.36; ROB, I, p.163, 286; II, pp.x-xiv, 86-89; Than Tun, *History of Buddhism*, p.9; *Konbaung set Mahāyazawindagyi*, pp.548-9.

80 For more information see Than Tun, *History of Buddhism,* chaps. IX (Religious Buildings) and X (The Slaves and Medieval Burma).

81 Ibid, p.135.

82 ROB, I, pp.239, 369, 377, 381, 431- 432.

83 *Shin MahāsilavaṃsaSounmasar*, p.267.

84 For instance, *okasam karoti* (D i 51; M ii 142; S iv 57; Vin i 114); *okasam yacati* (M ii 123). See also Pali-English Dictionary, p.163.

85 *Se zaung dwe* (A Collection of Ten Texts), pp.49-55.

86 *Se zaung dwe,* pp.274-286.

87 Janakabhivamsa, *Anagat thathana yay* (Future of the Sasana), p.320.

88 D iii 180-193.

89 Gray, pp. viii-x, 1-36. For more complete information on the *Lokanīti* see Bechert & Braun, "Introduction" *Pali Nīti Texts of Burma,* pp.xxxviii-liv.

90 Vin i 83-84.

91 *Shwegu shin kyint wut*, pp.i-iii.

92 Bode, p.100.

93 ROB, I, pp.467-471.

94 Ibid, p.467.

95 Andrew Huxley, (Reader in Politics, School of Oriental and African Studies, London), speaking at the conference on "Buddhism, Power, and Political Order in South and Southeast Asia", Harris Manchester College, Oxford, 14 April 2004.

96 Bode, pp.50-52. See also Huxley, "Buddhism and Law: The View from Mandalay" *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies,* Vol. 18, No. 1, 1995.

97 ROB, I, pp.467-471.

98 Huxley. Personal communication.

99 *Ibid,* pp.86-87.

100 SobhanasirI, *Mahādvara-nikaya sasanadipani*, pp.134-136,323-324.

101 *Ibid.*

102 Kelatha, cit., II, pp.23-24, 124-125, 128, 131-132, 172-173, 184.

103 Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, pp.157-160.

104 Than Tun, pp.96-97.

105 *Ibid*, p.96.

106 *Ibid*, pp.97-99.

107 *Ibid*, p.120.

108 *Ibid.*

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid.

111 Ferguson, p.167.

112 Ibid,p.164-165; Than Tun, "The Shwegyin Sect" *Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma,* pp.152-153.

113 Ferguson, p.165.

114 *Pitakatthamaing*, pp.181-183; Panditasiri, *Shwegyin-nikāya thathanawin*, (History of the Shwegyin-nikaya), pp.83-85.

115 *Pitakatthamaing*, pp.182-183.

116 Ibid.

117 Bode, p.53; Panditasiri,pp.83-84. Also Ferguson, p.169.

118 ROB, IV, p.406. ROB dated 17 March, 1788.

119 Ibid, p.408. ROB dated 18 March, 1788.

120 Ibid, p.565. ROB dated 28 June, 1895.

121 Sobhanasiri, *Mahādvara-nikaya sasanadipani,* pp.192-197.

122 This work is known as *Silakkhandha-abhinava- īkā.*

123 Malalgoda, pp.97-98. For more on the *Amarapūra-nikāya*, see Ibid, Ch. II, pp.87-105; Ch. III, pp.139-143 & Ch. IV, pp.144-172.

124 Ibid.

125 Scott, p.382.

126 *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and Shan State*, No.I, Vol.I, p.2.

127 Kelatha, *Mandalay thathanawin*, I, p.99.

128 Than Tun, pp.116-117.

129 Ibid, p.126.

130 ROB, II, pp.365, 467.

131 Shwebo, Sagaing and Ava were used as capital by the early Kon-Baung rulers.

132 ROB, IV, p.252. They were Nyanavilasa Sayadaw; Mingala Shwebon Sayadaw; Mahā Mingala Shwebon Sayadaw; and Bonkyawweiyan Sayadaw.

133 ROB, IV, pp.501-502.

134 They were: Taung Lay Lone; Mahādanwun Kyaung; Ein Shyay Kyaung; Palaing; Hmundaw; Shwe Taung; Bagaya; Mehtee; Sinte; Katoe; Maung Taung; and Nyaung Kan Sayadaw. *Ibid.*

135 Ibid, p.414. See also pp. 91-92.

136 Than Tun, "The Shwegyin Sect", p.156;Shwe Gain Tha, *Mandalay hnit taya pyi* (*The Centenary of Mandalay*), p.231.

137 Ibid& Kelatha, I, p.99.

138 Bischoff, *Buddhism in Myanmar*, p.58.

139 Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, p.623.

140 Ingrid Jordt, *Burma's Mass Lay Meditation Movement,* pp. 42-43.

141 *Pariyatti pyinnya yay ci man kain*, p.5.

142 Than Tun, "Administration Under King Thalun", p.125.

143 ROB, III, p.286. See also Koenig, *The Burmese Polity*, pp.76-89.

144 Than Tun, 1984, "Ayut'ia Men in the Service of Burmese Kings, 16th&17th Centuries" *Tonan Ajia Kenkyu* (*Southeast Asian Studies*) Journal, XXI, IV, pp.401-402.

145 Ibid; Wood, *A History of Siam*, pp.117- 119; Wyatt, *Thailand,* pp.100-101.

146 ROB, II, p.xv.

147 Ibid, pp.193-194.

148 ROB, III, p.xxiv; Phayre, pp.149-166.

149 ROB, III, p.xxxii. See also Phayre, p.169.

150 ROB, IV, p.xxiv. On 4 October 1782, two commanders, Min Ye Myat Hpone and Gamani, attempted to seize the palace but were captured and executed.

151 ROB, IV, pp.388-395; Harvey, pp.267-267.

152 See also p. 34.

153 ROB, IV, pp.447-453.

154 Ibid, p.447.

155 ROB issued on 8 July 1785. Ibid, IV, pp.450-452.

156 Ibid, p.447.

157 Than Tun, "Administration under King Thalun, 1629-1648", p.119.

158 Ibid, p.117.

159 For more information, see Kelatha, *Mandalay thathanawin; Mahāvisutārāmika gaṇavācakanikāya thamaing hmatdan*, (Records of the *Mahāvisutārāma* teaching tradition), and biographies of prominent monks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Burma. Mendelson also discusses the subject briefly in *Sangha and State*, pp.150-157.

160 By 1980 it had branches in 123 towns and cities with over 2200 teachers. Kelatha, pp.1, 15& 28.

161 For more, see Daw Yazananyania, *The* Study of The Abhidhamma amongst the Laity in Myanmar, a paper presented at the Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities conference, 2007 at http://atbu.org/node/10. (accessed on 19 April 2011.)

162 Ingrid Jordt, p. 138.

163 Bischoff, "Preface" *The Way to Ultimate Calm*, p. 2.

164 Ibid, p. 5.

165 Ibid, p. 2.

166 Ibid. p. 3.

167 Jack Kornfield, p. 51.

168 See Ingrid Jordt, Chapter III.

169 For more see, Ibid, Chapter I.

170 Ibid, xii.

171 Jack Kornfield, p. 52

172 Ashin Ghosita, p. 140.

173 Ibid, *Preface*.

174 Jack Kornfield, pp. 193, 195.

175 Ibid, pp. 199-200.

176 Ibid, p. 86.

177 U Kyi, p. 228.

178 For more on Burmese nuns, see Hiroko Kawanami (1990).

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ESSAY 10

Buddhism in Thailand

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Introduction

Buddhism occupies a central place in Thai society. National statistics show that more than 94% of Thais practice Buddhism.[1] Based on its sheer demographic weight, Buddhism is considered to be the state religion of Thailand—although it is not directly mentioned in the constitution of the country.[2] In many ways, Thai-style Theravada Buddhism is central to contemporary conceptions[3] of Thai identity and culture. Since at least the turn of the twentieth century and the emergence of modern nationalism, Buddhism has played a special role as one of Thailand's three national institutions. Soon after his ascendance to the throne, King Rama VI (reigned 1910-25) formulated the three institutions of Thai national identity as Nation, Religion, and Monarchy–religion meaning, for all practical purposes, Buddhism. The triumvirate of Nation, Religion, and Monarchy is embedded in the heart of every Thai and has been enshrined in every legal document since the sixth reign, including constitutions. Each Thai is reminded of the three institutions every time he or she looks at the tri-color flag, which was adopted to signify these very institutions. There can be little doubt that for the framers of this nationalist ideology, Buddhism holds pride of place under the heading of "religion." But the Thai institution of religion, by tradition and by law, also signifies freedom of religion, and peaceful co-existence of all beliefs. Of course the significance of Buddhism in Thailand cannot simply be reduced to demographics and nationalist politics; it remains a vibrant and central part of Thai social life to this day.

In general terms, we might say that Thai Buddhism is divided into two distinct schools (Pali: *nikaya*; Thai: *nikai*) of the Theravada tradition, the majority *Mahanikai* and the smaller *Thammayutikanikai*. Although it is usually considered a Theravada Buddhist country, there are also two Mahayana monastic lineages in Thailand, the *Chin* (Chinese) *nikai* and the *Anam* 'Annamese' or Vietnamese *nikai*. Neither the *Chin* nor the *Anam* lineage has any direct connection with ecclesiastical authorities in China or Vietnam today, but they continue to represent immigrant communities of Chinese or Vietnamese ethnicity in Thailand. In spite of their relatively smaller demographics and public profile relative to the Theravada lineages, both of these Mahayana lineages are recognized by the Thai state and the monarchy (which is responsible for granting monastic titles). Each of the Mahayana lineages in Thailand has its own *Chao khana yai*, or patriarch, who is appointed by the Thai monarchy and acts as their representative in ecclesiastical matters.[4] It is interesting to note that Mahayana Buddhist monks in Thailand appear to be moving in the direction of greater conformity with the ritual and disciplinary expectations of Theravada Buddhist monks, obeying monastic rules for taking meals and offering blessings in the Pali language. While their monastic dress remains consistent with the customs of their native lands, the central scriptures have been transliterated into the Thai script as many of the *Chin* and *Anam nikai* monks today do not have adequate language capabilities in Chinese or Vietnamese to conduct ritual life in those languages.

There are approximately 36,412 'live' Buddhist temples (with resident monks) and 5,924 Buddhist reliquary temples (without monks in residence) in Thailand. The vast majority of those temples belong to one of the two Theravada lineages, with a total of about thirty temples being administered by the two Mahayana schools. The more recent data shows a total of 267,939 monks in Thailand and 65,937 novices (*Khomun* 2010). Data on Thai nuns, known as *mae chi*, is more difficult to come by because they are not formally recognized as members of the monastic community by the Thai ecclesiastical authorities. In 2007, the number of *mae chi* officially registered with the independent Thai Institute of *Mae Chi* was only 5,000—though this number is likely quite low as earlier data from the department of religious affairs placed their number at 14,691.[5] Although their role is often unrecognized, Thai nuns play an essential role in monastic life and religious life in general in Thailand. Some Thai nuns choose to reside on temple grounds in separate areas from monks, while some have chosen a more independent monastic existence in distinct nunneries where they can engage in a full monastic life parallel to that of male monastics. Thai nuns have access to all the educational facilities and opportunities provided by the Thai state to the sangha, in both religious and secular courses of study. Recently, institutes of monastic higher education have been founded specifically for nuns, and it is hoped that these institutions will provide a channel of upward mobility for women who ordain in the same way as monastic education has long provided access to educational opportunities for young men.[6] Some Thai nuns have distinguished themselves as Pali language scholars, such as *Achan* (Professor) *Mae Chi* Vimmuttiya, who heads the International Tripitaka Hall at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok.[7] *Mae Chi* Sansanee Sthirasuta is another Buddhist nun who is very successful in the propagation of Buddhism through her engaged Buddhist activities and teachings.

In many ways, the institutional outlines of contemporary Thai Buddhism can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century, when the prince who would later become King Mongkut (King Rama IV, (reigned 1851-1868), spent twenty-seven years in the yellow robes of a Buddhist monk. Early on in his monastic career, Mongkut became dissatisfied with the state of Thai Buddhism, and he began to engage critically with the accepted habits of monastic practice and education. He decided that the only way to reform the wayward beliefs of lay people and the lax discipline of monks was to return to the Pali canonical texts (Tambiah 1976: 208-219). Mongkut was ready to abandon any forms of thought or practice that were without precedent or justification in the texts of the Pali canon. In time, his reformist agenda came to bear on the very practice of monastic higher ordination in Thailand. Mongkut concluded that if the practice of higher ordination had deviated from the canonical rule, then the very ordination lineage that encompassed the vast majority of Thai Buddhist monks at the time was illegitimate. This critical insight led Mongkut to import a new monastic lineage, one that was practiced by ethnic Mon monks from southern Burma. Afterwards, Mongkut and his reformed cohort could no longer participate in the rituals of monastic life with other Thai Buddhist monks, since they viewed their very ordination as problematic.

Mongkut's desire to return to the Pali canonical texts and to import a more rigid form of ordination eventually led to the formation of two distinct ordination lineages in Thailand, the *Mahanikāya* (Thai: *Maha nikai*) and *Dhammayutikanikaya* (Thai: *Thammayut nikai*). During the reign of Mongkut's predecessor, King Rama III (reigned 1824-1851), the new ordination lineage was not recognized as being formally distinct from the traditional Thai lineage. In fact, although the two lineages would drift further apart during Mongkut's tenure on the throne, it was not until the time of his son and successor, King Chulalongkorn (reigned 1868-1910), that they would be formally recognized as two distinct entities under a single administrative body. The 1902 Sangha Act promulgated by King Chulalongkorn recognized the Thammayut *nikai* as a distinct entity within the Thai sangha and established a parallel administrative hierarchy within each lineage (Ishii 1986: 69-76; Jackson 1989: 67-9; Tambiah 1976: 233-241). This administrative structure lasted until the Sangha Act of 1963, which abolished the democratic procedures and bodies of the administrative apparatus established by the 1902 Act and replaced them with a more powerful executive figurehead, the Supreme Patriarch, and an advisory board known as the Council of Elders (Thai: *Mahatherasamakhom*) as the new ecclesiastical governing body for both lineages (Tambiah 1976: 252ff.). The outlines of this administrative structure exist more or less unaltered to the present day, but many other aspects of monastic life have changed dramatically since Prince Mongkut began experimenting with new forms of monastic discipline, ritual, and education.

Mongkut's desire to return to the Pali canonical texts as the source of authority in religious life had a profound effect on the way in which monks engaged with the foundations of Buddhist thought and Pali scholarship (Anil [2004]). Although each of the ordination lineages today possesses its own Buddhist university, the Mahachulalongkorn University (*Maha nikai*) and the Mahamakhut University (*Thammayut*), the foundations of each of their modern monastic curricula, including the disciplines of Buddhist teachings and Pali language education, were laid by Mongkut's reformation and its institutionalization during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Tambiah 1976: 219-225).

Among the many introductions to the subject of Buddhism in Southeast Asia, the work of Donald Swearer (1995) stands out for the way in which it encompasses both the doctrinal and social aspects of Buddhism while conveying a good sense of material culture as well. Grounded in Thai empirical data, Swearer's work serves as a good introduction to the specific case of Thai Buddhism. Yoneo Ishii's *Sangha, State, and Society* (1986) provides a clear introduction to the history of Thai Buddhism, focusing on the interactions between the religion and political culture. Rather than simply recount the work of the foremost scholars of Thai Buddhism in the form of an encyclopedic introduction—a task that has been masterfully performed by Swearer already (2004)—this essay aims to provide a critical analysis of one particular area of Thai Buddhism, namely its origins.

King of Thailand

The decision to focus on the origins of Buddhism in mainland Southeast Asia in this brief essay is not an arbitrary one. To write the prehistory of Thai Buddhism is to inquire into the regional forms of communication and contact that brought a new form of religious life to mainland Southeast Asia. At the same time, by evaluating potentially new trajectories and vectors of Buddhist thought and practice, we might reveal hidden repositories of Thai cultural life. At stake is the question of the arrival of South Asian forms of culture, the so-called "Indianization" (Coedès 1968; Mabbett 1977) of much of mainland Southeast Asia. More specifically, we must reconsider the relative importance of overseas versus overland forms of commerce and exchange, and the corresponding weight of Sri Lankan (and southern Indian) versus northern Indian cultural influence. In order to provide a background for such an inquiry, it is important to consider first the predominant historical narratives that depict the arrival and ascendance of Buddhism in the Chao Phraya River valley (and by extension mainland Southeast Asia at large), and the kinds of values and assumptions that have served as the confining parameters for such inquiries.

The Early and Premodern History of Thai Buddhism

Scholars, nationalists, and Buddhists alike link the arrival of Buddhism in the region that is now encompassed by the Thai nation-state with the emissaries sent by the Northern Indian king Asoka to *Suvannabhumi*, "the golden land," circa 300 BCE.[8] But it is important to note that this popular tradition seems to be influenced by attempts to link the origins of what would later become known as Theravada Buddhism with the original teachings and followers of the Buddha. The mythology of Asoka's emissaries, the monks Sona and Uttara, provides Thai Buddhism with a direct genealogical connection to the Buddha's immediate successors through what is commonly assumed to be an overseas mission to mainland Southeast Asia. According to this historiographical tradition, Asoka's mission becomes the first of a number of overseas monastic missions linking the Buddhist lands of Southeast Asia to one another and back in time to the historical Buddha.

Wat Chaiwattanaram-Ayutthaya

Charles Hallisey (1995: 36-8) has discussed how this kind of genealogy appealed to the historicist logic of colonial-era scholars of Buddhism—and of some Buddhists as well. The claim to a direct and unmediated connection to the earliest incarnations of Buddhist thought and practice validated what was then known as Hinayana Buddhism in the eyes of colonial scholars, who assumed that the most essential aspects of Buddhism could only be found in the historical Buddha's earliest teachings. Hallisey, following Steven Collins (1990), suggests that a similar form of logic, a "metaphysics of origins" likewise characterized indigenous approaches to Buddhist historiography. According to Hallisey, this shared concern for the earliest origins of the tradition was not a cultural feature imposed on Buddhists by colonial scholars; instead, it appears to be a coincidental form of cultural life, an instance of what he calls "intercultural mimesis," that had implications for both colonial scholarship and indigenous Buddhist textual traditions (1995: 33).

Even those who subscribe to the historicity of Asoka's Buddhist mission to Southeast Asia realize that it alone was not sufficient to establish any one distinctive form of Buddhist practice throughout the region, let alone a particular monastic ordination lineage. For at least a millennium after the supposed arrival of Asoka's emissaries, religious life in the region can only be described as "eclectic," consisting of an evolving mixture of Buddhism, Hinduism, and indigenous animist practices (Prapod 2010: 149; Swearer 2004: 830).[9] These forms of religious life were constantly subject to the *ad* *hoc* practices of localization, which helped determine the relation of new ideas to established forms of belief, ritual practice, and institutional life. At the same time, however, Indian religious life was itself changing and evolving, adding to the variability of the local amalgam. This description captures the broad contours of religious life in mainland Southeast Asia for at least the first millennium of the Common Era. This period is often regarded as the first stage in the spread of Buddhism to Thailand, during the era when the ethnic Mon kingdoms of Dvaravati and (later) Lavo controlled much of the lower Chao Phraya River valley (Hazra 1981: 69-70).

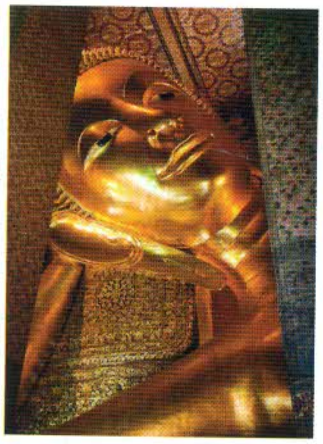
In the midst of all this flux, the arrival of distinctive and exclusive forms of Buddhist monasticism that originated in Sri Lanka can only be seen as a stabilizing influence. Sri Lankan monastic lineages arrived in the region with (a) a sense of lineage identity elaborated through competition with other ordination lineages and (b) a canon, or closed set of texts regarded as *the* definitive collection of the Buddhist teachings and monastic rules (Collins 1990). It has been argued that the arrival of Buddhist monasticism helped pave the way for a period of political centralization in mainland Southeast Asia, as temple life provided units of administration of population and territory as well as a more or less coherent political ideology.[10] Steven Collins, for instance, suggests that a defining moment in Theravada Buddhist history came when Pali texts and Theravada monastic lineages were "combined with other forms of social power," particularly "military-political power on the Southeast Asian mainland" as was the case in the emerging premodern states of Pagan (in Burma) and Sukhothai (in Thailand) (1998: 71). Tambiah (1976) offers a more elaborate vision of this emerging religio-political structure, noting a recurring pattern in the development of successive Thai states beginning with Sukhothai (c. 1238-1438 CE) in the central Chao Phraya River valley. The Thai polities at Sukhothai, Ayutthya (1351-1767), and Bangkok (founded 1782) developed along two axes:

> On the one hand they were by their own account influenced by Sinhalese traditions (but in practice also by Pagan, Mon and Khmer traditions), which included not merely Pali Buddhism but also the important notion of guardianship and purification of the *sangha* by the king . . . On the other hand, the political vicissitudes and instabilities of the Thai kingdoms, their rise and fall, were integrally related to the homologous levels of cosmological, territorial, and politico-economic designs that constituted them into a total formation that we have called the galactic polity, characterized by a pulsation between weaker and stronger states or modalities (Tambiah 1976: 6).

Tambiah's work offers a complex picture of the patterned relations of religion, politics, and geography in this second phase, when Buddhism came to occupy the central place in Thai religious life.[11]

During this second historical phase in the arrival of Buddhism in mainland Southeast Asia, local kings sought to import Sri Lankan monastic lineages, whether directly from the island of Sri Lanka or indirectly by way of Southern Burmese (ethnic Mon) monks who had received ordination in Sri Lankan lineages.[12] This era is well attested to in the historical record, with stone inscriptions noting the arrival of monks from a Sri Lankan ordination lineage, or *Lankavamsa* (Thai: *langka wong*), to the Siamese kingdom of Sukhothai (by way of the southern city of Nakhorn Si Thammaraj) circa 1257 CE (Blackburn 2007: 201; Gosling 1991: 29; Ishii 1986: 60). Some two or three generations later, that Sinhalese monastic lineage would be revived when monks from Sukhothai received higher ordination from ethnic Mon monks of the same lineage (Na Nagara & Griswold 1992: 320). After the rise of Ayutthya, the successor kingdom to the south of Sukhothai in the Chao Phraya River valley, a group of thirty-three monks traveled to Sri Lanka to be ordained and bring the Sinhalese lineage back to the royal city of Ayutthya (Hazra 1981: 152-6). Finally, the Siamese were able to return the favor in the mid-eighteenth century, when a monastic mission led by the monk Upali traveled to Sri Lanka to effectively re-import the Sri Lankan ordination lineage, which would henceforth be known in Sri Lanka as the *Siyam Nikaya*, or Siamese lineage (Ishii 1986: 64; Hazra 1981: 167-171).[13]

Historical scholars of Buddhism such as Hallisey (1995) and Collins (1990) have demonstrated the fundamental ways in which western historicist assumptions have shaped the historiography of Buddhism, and their work has prompted important revisionist trends in Buddhist studies. In the wake of their work, textual scholars have become more attentive to the fundamental position of non-canonical texts, often composed in the vernacular, as the true founts of Buddhist intellectual life (e.g., Sommai & Swearer 1998; McDaniel 2008; Veidlinger 2006). Ethnographically inclined scholars have turned away from the colonial emphasis on texts altogether, prompting a reevaluation of the centrality of practice and place in Buddhist worship (e.g., Swearer 2004; Swearer, Premchit & Phaitoon 2004; Taylor 2008). Nuanced studies of the intricate relations between Buddhism and colonial policy have appeared shedding light on the literary, institutional and social transformations of Buddhist life under colonial rule (Hansen 2007; Edwards 2007; Blackburn 2010). Recently, scholars have become more critically self-aware of the most fundamental of categories used in the taxonomy of Buddhism, the idea of a unified "Theravada" Buddhist school or tradition.

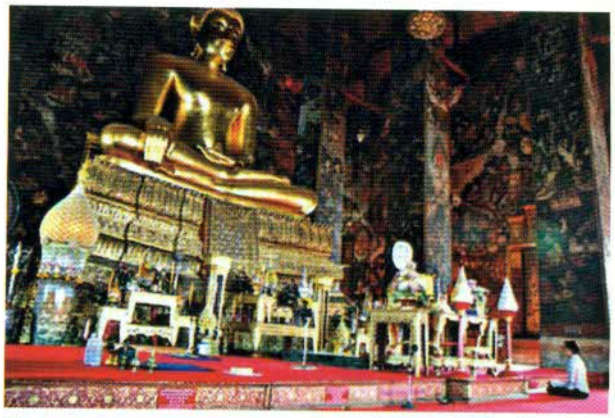


Reclining-buddha-wat-pho-bangkok

Thai Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism

Peter Skilling (2004) and Steven Collins (2010: 8-11) were among the first to voice reservations about the use of the term Theravada to describe the Buddhism practiced in much of mainland Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka. In spite of its current prominence, the Pali term *theravada* is of relatively obscure and ambiguous origins. Skilling (2004) notes "the term *theravada* is an *extremely* rare term in Pali, and for nine hundred years it was scarcely *if ever* used in the Pali or vernacular inscriptions, chronicles, and other texts of Southeast Asia." The term seldom appears throughout the entire Pali canon, where it is used with reference to the "*nanavadin*," signifying one who "knows with certainty" or "knowing with confidence" (Abeynayake 2009: 2). In the Pali commentarial tradition, however, *theravada* is an unambiguously derogative term for a view that cannot be trusted due to its singularity, a view that represents "one's own view" (*attanomati*, the "independent view of the individual") (Abeynayake 2009: 3). In these cases, it is clear that the term does not refer to a conservative view, "the opinion of the elders"—as it is commonly translated—but to the opinion of an individual monk, and it is accordingly derided by the great commentarial author Buddhaghosa. In the lexicon of the Pali canon, the term *acariyavada* ("view of the teachers") seems to be a nearer approximation to the contemporary meaning of Theravada.

According to Skilling (2004), the ready acceptance and use of the term Theravada has actually served to encourage several fundamental misconceptions about the history of Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia. Used as shorthand to describe the religious life across the region, the idea of a Theravada form of Buddhism can suggest greater uniformity of practice, thought, and administration than has often been the case. With respect to Thai Buddhism in particular, scholars therefore lose sight of the relative autonomy of Buddhist monastic lineages, even those that were imported from Sri Lanka (or from southern Burma). For Skilling then, it would be more appropriate to view the history of Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia as a history of relatively autonomous ordination lineages.



Wat Suthat

This notion of a single Theravada Buddhism was born in 1950 as an alternative to the pejorative term "Hinayana," which defined forms of Southern Asian Buddhism in relation to the comparatively "greater vehicle" of Northern and East Asian Mahayāna Buddhism (Miyabara 1994: 2; Collins 2010: 9). The term was revived at the founding conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, a cosmopolitan gathering of representatives from twenty-seven countries in Asia, Europe and North America. The WFB's campaign to replace the pejorative term Hinayana with what amounts to almost a neologism was so successful that after half a century the term Theravada Buddhism was already taken for granted as naming the form of Buddhism that still exists today in Sri Lanka and across much of mainland Southeast Asia. This intentional revival of the term, meant to signify the conservative "opinion of the elders" seems to harbor some rhetorical weight and serves the historicist agenda outlined by Collins and Hallisey. The "elders" whose views the Theravada school is meant to embody are the conveners of the First Buddhist Council, a gathering of five hundred monks three months after the Buddha's *parinibbana*. The idea of a single Theravada school therefore imbues those South and Southeast Asia forms of Buddhism and Buddhist monastic lineages with a distinctive genealogy as the legacy of those five hundred senior monks, or *thera*-s.

To date, the progress made by the recent revisionist trends in Buddhist studies (described above) has not yet been brought to bear on the early historiography of Thai Buddhism. In spite of a lack of corroborating archeological evidence, Asoka's mission to *Suvannabhumi* remains the historiographical starting point. Moreover, Asoka's mission is presumed to have arrived in mainland Southeast Asia by ship. The appeal of this particular mythology is that it creates a neat analogue for the later arrival of Buddhist monasticism by overseas routes from Sri Lanka in the period of Theravada ascendancy in the second millennium CE. But apart from this genealogical concern with locating precedents and creating an unbroken narrative to connect Thai Buddhism with the earliest and therefore most authentic Buddhist teachings, there is little reason to accept this hypothesis, and in fact there are several good reasons for suspicion.

The remainder of this essay will propose a number of hypotheses for re-examining the prehistory of Thai Buddhism. Some of the hypotheses are based on contemporary ethnographic observation, others on historical geography, and still others on somewhat anecdotal ethnographic evidence. In every case, though, the intention of raising these issues is to press scholars of Buddhism, historians, and archeologists to abandon the constraints that both colonial-era historiography and Buddhist mythology have placed on our imagination of the path of Buddhism to mainland Southeast Asia and its chronology.

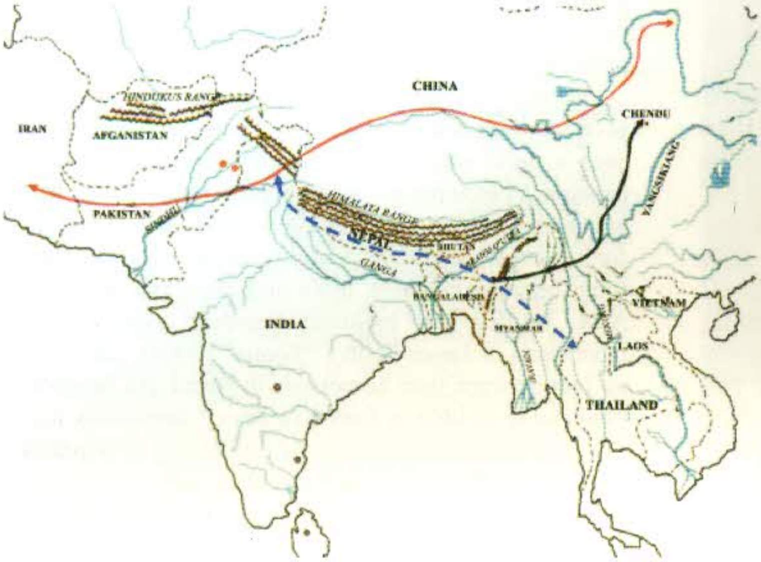
Before turning to the specific hypotheses about the historical origins of Buddhism in mainland Southeast Asia, it is important to introduce one basic but important analytical distinction: the difference between the arrival of Buddhism and the arrival of Buddhist monasticism. In the case of the later, the historical record is fairly robust and the influence of distinct monastic lineages from Sri Lanka is clear (even in cases where their arrival was mediated by ethnic groups in what is now Southern Burma, such as the Mon). The arrival of Sri Lankan forms of Buddhism in the second phase of the arrival of Buddhism in mainland Southeast Asia is best characterized as the rise of formal Buddhist monasticism in Thailand.[14] But perhaps too much attention has been given to the arrival of monastic ordination lineages and their origins? And this historiographical trend has necessitated that scholars favor overseas routes of communication in their attempts to chart the arrival of Buddhism in Southeast Asia. This emphasis on monasticism seems to reflect a similar sort of historicist bias as that of colonial-era scholars and much indigenous Buddhist historiography. Perhaps the more demographically significant story of the arrival of Buddhism in Thailand should be told not through seafaring monastic lineages but rather through the more quotidian forms of interaction that characterized, for example, overland trade routes.

Trade and the Spread of Buddhism: A "Cotton Road"?[15]

Trade was undoubtedly an important channel for the spread of Buddhism to Southeast Asia; Buddhist missions were another. The combination of these two forms of social intercourse offers a viable model for thinking through the arrival of all manner of cultural influences from South Asia. To date, however, the historiography of these connections has concentrated on seaborne trade at the expense of overland trade connections. Indigenous chronicle traditions, particularly Sinhalese chronicles, have contributed to this bias, focusing on singular instances of overseas monastic missions beginning with those of Asoka. In both cases, however, the question of communication is paramount. In the case of Asoka's mission to *Suvannabhumi*, for instance, "we must assume either that the Theras were well versed in the local language or that the local people were well versed in Pali, since it was recorded [in Sinhalese chronicles] that the Theras preached the *Brahmajalasutta* [a dense philosophical text] upon their arrival" (Prapod 2010: 60). Greater attention to the role of overland trade might help to dispel such doubts.

The trans-Asian overland trade routes collectively known as the "Silk Road," which date to some five hundred years after the time of the Buddha at the start of the Common Era, are widely acknowledged as the path of Mahayana Buddhism to East Asia (Neelis 2004). The Silk Road was the infrastructure for the kind of sustained cultural engagement necessary to convey complex religious ideas as well as the forms of material culture and institutions that support a religious tradition. In addition to the Silk Road, the so-called "Northern Highway," which connected the farthest northeastern and northwestern outreaches of the Indian subcontinent, provides another important precedent for thinking about the vital role of overland connections in fostering cultural exchange (Dar 2006). Given the context of a long-lived overland trade route, it is easy to imagine cross-cultural social relationships spanning a lifetime and the pragmatic evolution of pidgin language forms that developed into creoles capable of conveying more complex philosophical ideas. As a corrective to the bias towards overseas Buddhist monastic missions in the historiography of Southeast Asian Buddhism, this essay suggests that scholars reconsider the potential role of overland trade.

Since analogues seem to play such an important role in Theravada Buddhist historiography, with Asoka's mission to *Suvannabhumi* acting as the precedent for future missions, perhaps scholars should be seeking a



White Temple

Wat Arun at Sunset

"Cotton Road," as a southern analogue to the northern Silk Road. One particular southern spur of the Silk Road has recently attracted the attention of scholars of southern China. The "Southwestern Silk Road" linked Chengdu (the present day capital of Sichuan Province) with the Indian subcontinent, passing through Yunnan and mountainous northern Burma. The focus of recent scholarship has been on the role of the "Southwestern Silk Road" as "an important point of contact between the two great civilizations of China and India" (Anderson 2009) and to demonstrate the integration of Yunnan and parts of China in the global networks of communication of the day (Yang 2004). But world-system analytical agendas neglect the intermediate depots and minor spurs that would have added to the vibrancy of such an overland trade route. The focus on exchange between China and Eurasia can also obscure the more localized movements of peoples, goods, and ideas between intermediate sites along the various spurs of the Silk Road. For these reasons, it seems appropriate to suggest a distinct label for the southern offshoots of the Southwestern Silk Road, connecting present-day northern Thailand with the trade routes linking Assam and southern China. Cotton was likely traded in heavy volume along this southwestern route connecting Yunnan, Burma, and Assam (Misra 2005: 52); the "Cotton Road" therefore seems a fitting designation for this network of overland trade routes.

The "Cotton Road" provides an important alternative—or perhaps supplementary—channel for thinking about the kinds of historical connections between South and Southeast Asia that could have fostered the spread of Buddhism. As noted above, traditionally both indigenous Buddhist and academic historiography have focused on overseas monastic missions to explain the spread of Buddhism to mainland Southeast Asia. The presumed prominence of this channel of material and cultural exchange would seem to suggest that southern Indian forms of cultural influence should prevail in Southeast Asia—this is especially true following the acceleration in monastic missions to and from Sri Lanka towards the end of the first millennium of the Common Era. The reality of widespread northern Indian cultural elements in Thailand then, poses a challenge to this school of thought. One prominent example of widespread northern Indian cultural influence is the role of Ayurvedic medical theory in Thai traditional medicine (Mulholland 1979). Other examples will be given below, but we should now reflect on the viability of overland trade as a channel for the spread of Buddhism to Southeast Asia.

It is a widely noted fact that early Buddhism relied on merchant culture for its patronage and for the social networks that facilitated its spread. These patronage ties are perhaps most easily envisioned within an urban context, with wealthy merchants donating lands for Buddhist temples and spaces for retreat—and indeed, the Pali canonical texts seem to justify such a vision. But one passage in the Pali canonical rules of monastic discipline, the *vinaya*, suggests otherwise. This brief passage indicates how a trade route such as the "Cotton Road" might have been a viable overland channel for spreading Buddhism to the Southeast Asian mainland. The canonical *vinaya* prohibits travel by monks away from their home temple during the rainy season. But there is one important exception that creates the interesting possibility that overland routes might have been a viable means of travel for a monastic mission such as Asoka's. The Pali *vinaya* states that it is permissible for a monk to travel away from his home temple during the rainy season if he is able to travel with a particular caravan of merchants, in which case he can make that caravan his temple.[16] While overseas monastic missions would have relied on seasonal monsoon winds to bear them to Southeast Asia, monks affiliated with an overland caravan of merchants could travel year-round without fear of committing an offense against their disciplinary rules.

What other forms of evidence might there be for trying to envision an overland trade route such as the "Cotton Road"? Instances of mass migration that occurred along the proposed trade route are one potential piece of evidence, as in the case of ethnic Tai peoples living in Assam, India. There is an etymological argument that not only are the Ahom people ethnically linked with the Tai ancestors of the present-day Thai people of the central Southeast Asian mainland, but that in fact the name of their present day homeland, Assam, is a northern Indian derivation of *Siam*, the term used by Thais for their own kingdoms (Kanya 2001: 110). Such an argument suggests that the Ahom people migrated in mass from the Chao Phraya River valley (or the areas immediately to the north prior to the historical Tai migrations southward)—perhaps across an overland trade route—to present day Assam. This kind of large-scale migration of an ethnically Tai people may yet yield evidence—linguistic, ethnographic, or archaeological—that could lend some credence to the idea of a developed overland trade route (a "Cotton Road") connecting the Southeast Asian mainland with northern India. Other speculations about the origins of the Ahom people, however, suggest a common mythical ancestry to that of some Nepalese highland peoples (the Tibeto-Burman speaking Kiranti tribes of eastern Nepal).[17] This raises the interesting possibility that Assam occupied something of a nexus along the "Cotton Road" joining the inhabitants of the northern Indian subcontinent and mainland Southeast Asian peoples in sustained commerce and potentially other forms of cultural exchange.

Setting out from the other side of this projected overland trade route, there is good reason to suspect that such a route was well-traveled by highland Nepalese peoples. Contemporary ethnographic research can help to corroborate these easterly connections, which provide further evidence for the viability of an overland trade route between northern India and mainland Southeast Asia. To this day, highland Nepalese tribal people, inhabitants of James Scott's "Zomia" (2009), can travel on foot between their homelands in Nepal and Northern Thailand in as little as forty-five days.[18] Interviews with Thais of Nepalese descent in the capital city of Bangkok revealed that Nepalese cowherds were employed to tend to the royal cattle in the early Bangkok period (in the area now known as Ratchadamnoen Road).[19] In the Chiang Mai National Museum, there is wooden footprint of the Buddha dating back several hundred years (circa 1400-1550 CE), which depicts the entire Buddhist cosmos. One of the heavenly realms is labeled with the ancient Nepalese Ranjana script and is adorned with a Nepalese-style *chedi*.[20] Similarly, excavations at Wat Ratchburana in the city of Ayutthaya, which was constructed in 1420 CE, have revealed two small Buddha images from Nepal (they are currently on exhibit at the Chao Sam Phraya Museum in Ayutthaya).

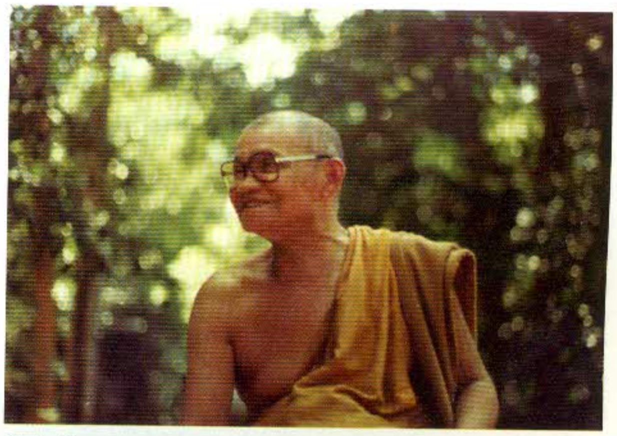
At this stage, the "Cotton Road" hypothesis, the idea of an overland channel for the arrival of Buddhism in the region now occupied by Thailand, remains little more than an interesting alternative to narratives predicated on the model of overseas Buddhist missions. We have presented only anecdotal ethnographic evidence and archeological clues that indicate cultural ties across a broad expanse of largely ungoverned highland territory. But it is to be hoped that further research in archeology and historical linguistics could help to corroborate this theory. The first item on the agenda is the confirmation of the existence of the "Cotton Road" as a sustained link for trade, migration, and other forms of communication between Assam and mainland Southeast Asia through archeology and historical linguistics and ethnography.

Conclusion: Status and Prospects of Buddhism in Thailand Today

This essay has considered the origins of Buddhism in Thailand in order to prompt some reflection on the assumptions that have guided historical scholarship. We have seen that during its historical ascendance in Thailand, Buddhism was an eclectic tradition, marked by a diverse number of influences from different schools, different geographical regions, and perhaps even forms of communication. In many ways, the same can be said of contemporary Thai Buddhism. Movements like Samnak Santi Asoke and Wat Phra Dhammakai draw upon diverse cultural influences and distinctive readings of Buddhist texts in order to cater to the religious needs of certain ethnic or socio-economic segments of the population (Jackson 1989; Mackenzie 2009; Taylor 2008). In the case of Wat Phra Dhammakai, for instance, Taylor (2008: 40ff.) highlights its East Asian Mahayana Buddhist influences and the integral role that modern forms of media have played in its spread.

Apart from the influence of contemporary media and East Asian culture, South Asia, the earliest homeland of Buddhism, continues to play a role in Thai Buddhism, particularly regarding the question of female monasticism. In yet another instance of the multifaceted nature of forms of Buddhism collectively known as Theravada, some Sri Lankan ordination lineages now allow women to take higher ordination as fully vested members of a monastic lineage. In Thailand, women may only ordain as Buddhist nuns (*mae chi*) who uphold ten precepts governing their behavior and can be recognized by their shaved heads and white robes. The religious authorities in Thailand do not allow women to ordain as female monks, (or *bhikhhuni*-s, who must observe 331 monastic precepts), because such an ordination tradition simply does not exist in Thailand. In 2003, however, a retired Thai academic named Chatsumarn Kabilsingh traveled to Sri Lanka to receive higher ordination by a Sri Lankan monastic lineage that permits female higher ordination. Now donning the monastic yellow robes, Dhammananda Bhikkhuni, (Chatsumarn's monastic title), is well aware of the historical connections between Thailand and Sri Lanka, and views her importation of female monasticism as simply the most recent instance of religious exchange and revival.[21]

Other, more mainstream modern trends in contemporary Thai Buddhism include: (1) increased laicization, (2) consumer-driven religious life, and (3) the survival of superstitious beliefs alongside Buddhist practice. The first and second of these three trends have extracted Buddhism from its traditional institutional home, the temple (Thai: *wat*), and from the hands of its traditional caretakers, the sangha, or community of monks. This shift is evidenced by the founding of new spaces for Buddhist practice and education and the phenomenon of lay Buddhist preachers, who attempt to embody many of the traditional roles of the Buddhist monk while inhabiting a space outside of the restraints of the Buddhist canonical rules of monastic discipline (the *vinaya*).These new centers of Buddhist life, which cater to an urban professional demographic, tend to be in antiseptic, climate-controlled environs in high-rise buildings (for example, on the twenty-second floor of Amarin Plaza on Sukhumvit Road). These classy settings differ radically from the more porous and organic environment of a traditional temple, with its stray dogs, humidity, soot, and traffic noise. Just as these sites cater to the consumer demands of the modern urban Thai Buddhist, so too can lay Buddhist preachers offer a message tailored to their lifestyles and values. It is sufficient here to sound a note of caution that this kind of a consumer-driven model of religious life tends to dilute the critical rigor of Buddhist teachings and meditative practices aimed at the cultivation of insight.



Ajahn Cha

The third trend, the growth of superstitious forms of belief, is not a new phenomenon in Thai religious life by any means, as the work of Tambiah (1984) shows. There is reason to believe, however, that the cult of amulets is gaining force in Thailand, with marginal forms of cultic practice seeming to cycle in and out of prominence at an accelerated rate. This cycle is perhaps best evidenced by the *Jathukam Ramathep* craze in the days after the 1997 Asian financial crisis (Pattana 2010). Today, the cult of the Hindu god Ganesh seems to be rapidly rising in popularity among Thai Buddhists. In what is perhaps a related phenomenon, the construction of Buddhist monumental architecture also seems to be accelerating over the last few decades, as Buddhist temples come to express global ambitions. The ostentatious grounds of *Wat Phra Dhammakaya* in Pathum Thani Province north of Bangkok are sufficient demonstration of this trend.

The secularization of religious education is another notable feature of contemporary Thai Buddhism.

Thailand's two Buddhist universities, administered separately by the *Maha nikai* and *Thammayut nikai*, together account for close to thirty campuses nationwide. Although they were founded with the expressed intention of providing Buddhist education to young novices and monks, they are recognized as state institutions and are supported by state funds. Today, modern Buddhist education at these two universities encompasses more than just Buddhist teachings and Pali language education, the two traditional foundations of monastic education in Thailand. The fact of the matter is that these Buddhist universities are rapidly moving towards a secular curriculum, with the majority of students meeting the minimum required credits in these areas while pursuing concentrations in secular disciplines.

Of course many central aspects of Thai Buddhism remain relatively unchanged even to this day. Buddhist monks are still highly revered in Thailand. As in the past, they continue to take an active role in various social development programs (such as public works projects), and in spite of a rapidly changing social climate they continue to find ways of being relevant and active mediators in Thai social life. To cite just one recent example, in the wake of the devastating 1997 Asian financial crisis, the highly revered monk the Ven. *Luang Ta* Maha Booa Nanasampanno undertook a campaign to solicit donations to pay off Thailand's national debts and revive the financial fortunes of the country.[22] TheVen. Maha Booa's decision to take such an active role in the civic life of the Thai nation was perhaps even more startling given his status as a prominent monk of the so-called forest tradition, known for its meditative practice and relative seclusion from lay life (Taylor 2008: 126). In this era of rapid social and technological change, books published by Thai Buddhist monks offering guidance to lay Buddhists continue to rank among the nation's bestsellers on an annual basis. Increasingly, monks are delving into new forms of media, including television, radio, podcasts, and the internet, to reach out of the temple and into the lives of the nation's youth. As novel as these forms of modern religious life appear, the underlying message and intention remains relatively unchanged, and the Thai people continue to find resonance and value in these teachings.[23]

Traditionally, Thai Buddhist monks could be distinguished based on the kinds of pursuits they chose to emphasize in their monastic career—scholarship and administration versus meditation, for example—or what kind of temple they inhabited—urban versus rural (or village versus forest in the deeper historical context of Theravada monasticism). Today, the meditative path remains a viable and popular option for Thai Buddhist monks. Monks who trace their ordination lineage and meditative practices back to the highly revered Thai forest monks *Achan* Sao Kantasilo (1859-1941) and *Achan* Man Bhuridatta (1870-1949) have founded forest monasteries (Thai: *wat pa*) devoted to the practice of meditation. These temples are popular sites of meditative retreat for monks and sites of pilgrimage for lay Buddhists wishing to pay their respects to the highly revered ascetic monks.[24] Thai forest monasticism has since spread beyond the Thai borders through a network of forest monk temples founded by *Achan* Man's followers. In addition to the contemporary forest monk tradition, several prominent monks have chosen the route of scholarship, offering influential analysis of the Buddhist teachings and their implications for modern Thai society. Among scholarly monks in Thai society, two stand out as particularly noteworthy for their intellectual power and the far-reaching implications of their messages: The Ven. Buddhadassa Bhikkhu (1906-1993) and *Phra* Prayudh Payutto (b. 1938). Both have helped to extend the rationalizing insights first explored by King Mongkut, thereby allowing generations of Thais to find new relevance in the texts of the Pali canon (Jackson 1989: 130ff). Throughout his long and storied monastic career, Thailand's current Supreme Patriarch, *Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara* (1913-present), has blurred the lines between these two distinct monastic career paths, distinguishing himself as both a scholar-administrator and a teacher of meditation. At present, there is good reason for optimism that the various educational facilities of the Thai *sangha*—from the state-supported universities to the forest temples—will continue to yield the kinds of dedicated and accomplished monastics—both male and female—who will continue to inspire faith and good works among the Thai people.

Notes

1 According to National Statistics Office of Thailand, whose 2007 numbers show that Buddhists represent 94.6%, Muslims 4.6%, Christians 0.7% and 0.1% other faiths (The Pluralism Project at Harvard University).

2 Although there is no law specifying that Buddhism is the national religion of Thailand, King Rama VI did institute a law stating that the king of Thailand had to be a Buddhist (Prapod 2010: 182).

3 At the moment, the reigning *Chao khana yai* of the *Chin nikai, Annam nikai*, and the Supreme Patriarch himself (who represents all four lineages) are all from the province of Kanchanaburi in the central western region of the country, which has become a point of pride for the province.

4 Data is based on personal communication from the Institute of *Mae Chi* Thai on June 5, 2007.

5 The Maha Pachapati. Their college under Mahamakut Buddhist University

confers degrees up to the Ph.D.; see http://www.pachapati.mbu.ac.th (accessed March 21, 2011).

6 For a detailed treatment of female monasticism in Thailand, and on Achan *Mae Chi* Vimmuttiya and her Pali scholarship, see Collins & McDaniel (2010: 1384ff.).

7 See, for example, *Buddhism in Thailand* (2545 [2002]) and Hazra (1981: 57, 68). For a thorough discussion of the historical sources on "the golden land" and their contemporary nationalist implications, see Prapod (2010: 49-56).

8 For a more detailed discussion, see Prapod (2010: 113-148).

9 Ishii argues that this period shows evidence of the emergence of a "well-established relationship between the [Siamese/Thai] monarchy and the Sangha" (1986: 63; 59-66

10 It is worth noting that the periodic 'restoration' of the Buddhist sangha and the Pali canon mentioned by Tambiah is an important feature of the historicist "metaphysics of origins" discussed by Hallisey and Collins (see above). The redaction of the Pali canon and the (re)importation of monastic higher ordination lineages became a central feature of political life in many of the states of mainland Southeast Asia.

11 The following is a short précis of a few of the monastic missions during this period; see Hazra (1981: 131-174) for a more detailed and exhaustive description.

12 Blackburn (2003) offers a concise study of the process of importing and 'localizing' a monastic lineage based on the reception of the *Siyam Nikaya* in eighteenth century Lanka; Blackburn (2001) offers a more comprehensive treatment of the same events. For those who read Thai, Prince Damrong's (2003) work offers primary source accounts of the same mission.

13 This period is attested to by the presence of inter-lineage competition in Sukhothai and Chiang Mai, for instance, where political competition played out through the introduction of new lineages and temple building campaigns (Blackburn 2007).

14 The following argument was first presented in the form of a conference paper (*Phra* Anil Dhammasakiyo [2010]).

15 This exception is found in the *Mahavagga*. See Thanisaro Bhikkhu (2007: 167); also available online at http://www.accesstoinsight.org (accessed March 11, 2011).

16 On the Kiranti peoples, see Whelpton (2005: 13-14).

17 *Phra* Anil Sakya, personal field notes from ethnographic interviews conducted at Bowoniwet Temple, Bangkok, in May 1993.

18 This area is even today known as *si yaek khok wua,* meaning the "cattle corral" intersection or "ranch junction." *Phra* Anil Sakya, personal field notes from ethnographic interviews conducted at Chulalongkorn Hospital, Bangkok, in February 1997, when visiting with fifth generation Thais of Nepalese descent. Based on genealogical reconstructions, their ancestors likely immigrated to Siam circa 1892, when they became cattle tenders who supplied the royal palace with cow's milk.

19 *Phra* Anil is grateful to Peter Skilling for bringing this object to his attention.

20 Dhammananda Bhikkhuni (2010) recently published her views on the issue of female monasticism in Thailand.

21 For details on the campaign, including an updated accounting of the donations following Ven. Maha Bua's recent passing, see http://www.luangta.com (accessed March 11, 2011).

22 McDaniel (2008: Chapter 7) presents such a vision of underlying continuity in spite of the use of new media.

23 Other well-known monks in the forest monk meditative tradition include *Achan* Cha Subhaddo (1918-1992), *Achan* Thate Desaransi (1902-1994), *Achan* Lee Dhammadharo (1907-1961), Luang Ta Maha Boowa (see above), and *Luang Pho* Waen Sujinno (1887-1995). The world-renowned meditation teachers in the lineage of *Achan* Man can trace their lineage back through several generations of monastic preceptors to King Mongkut himself, who worked to revive meditative practice in Siam during his years in the monkhood.

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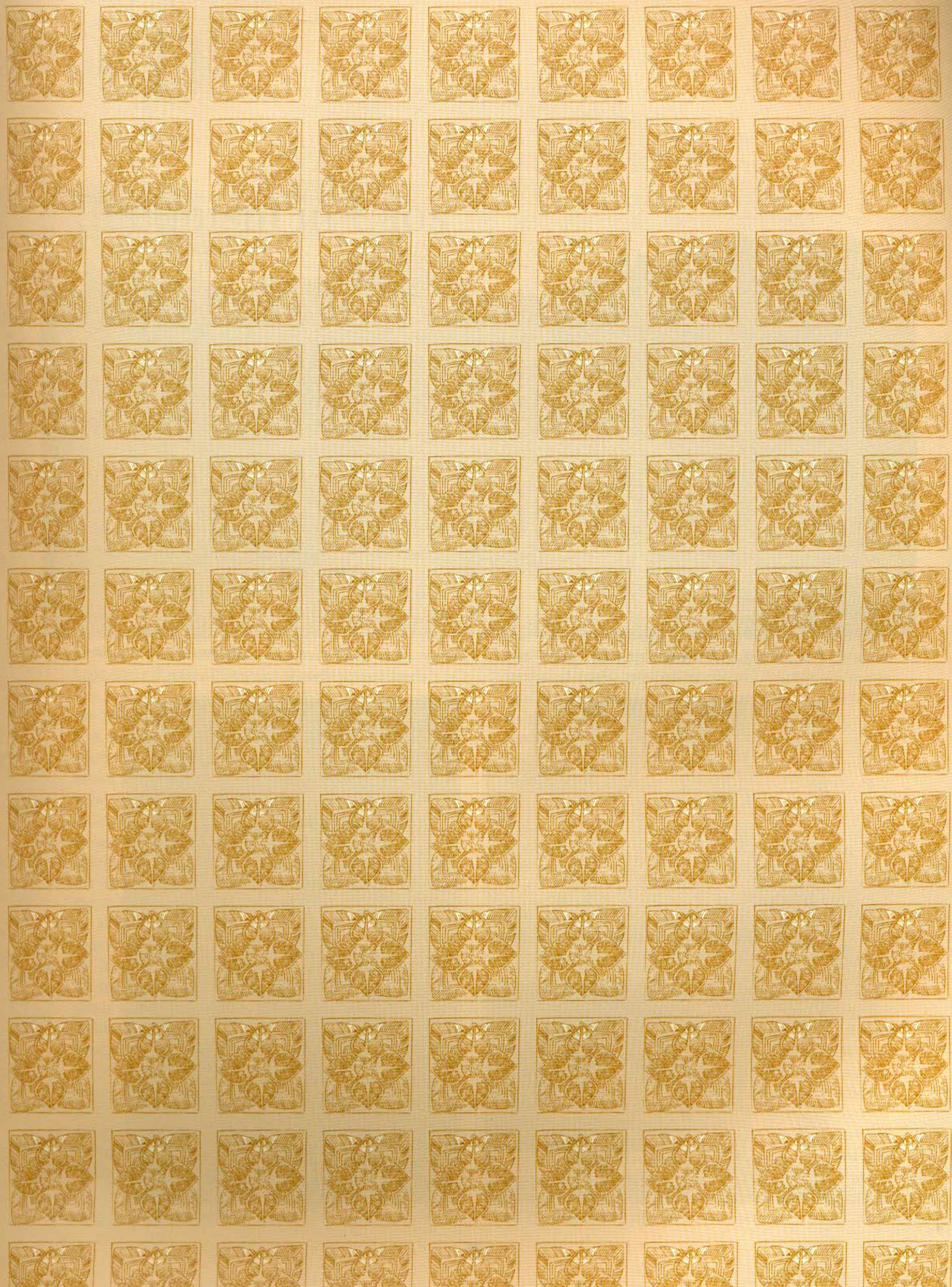
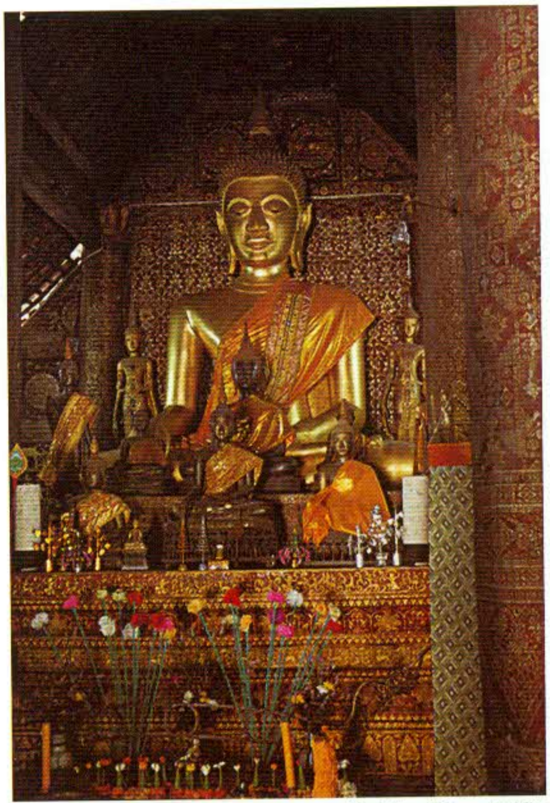


Vat Phou - UNESCO World Heritage Site

Naga sculptures guarding the temple - Luang Prabang

That Lung Vientiane Laos - 3rd Century



Wat Xieng Thong Buddha

ESSAY 11

Buddhism in Laos

A Short Introduction

Justin McDaniel

Although it is one of the least populated and poorest countries in the world, landlocked Laos has had a thriving Buddhist artistic and literary heritage for over 500 years. This short article will provide an overview of the institutional history of Buddhism in Laos focused on the activities of the monastic community and the types of Buddhist texts that were produced and studied from the sixteenth century to the present.[1] I do not have space to describe the complex healing and protective rituals, belief in ghosts and spirits common in Laos, or the history of Lao Buddhist romance and adventure stories. For readers interested in the relations between religion and politics in Laos or the history of Buddhist art in Laos, please see work in the bibliography by Henri Parmentier, Michel Lorrillard, John Holt, Oliver Tappe, Ian Baird, and Vatthana Pholsena.

While it has been largely disproven historically, many Lao believe that Buddhism was brought to the kingdom of Lan Xang ("Land of One Million Elephants") in present day Laos in the early fourteenth century by the famous king Fa Ngum. However, in Lao historical sources, whether it be the Tamnan Phra Bang, the Phongsavadan Muang Luang Phrabang (or Thai and Chinese historical sources that mention Laos) generally we have information only about the large, urban monasteries that were established or became active and influential in the sixteenth century. There is little evidence describing the institutional administration or daily activities of the monastic community. Manuscript colophons teach us a little about the movement of students between monasteries. However, these manuscripts are important for revealing the content and pedagogical methods of the ways in which Buddhism was taught. These sources, along with epigraphical evidence and studies of temple architecture, show us that Vat Mai in the northern city Luang Phrabang was the central monastery where military and royal ceremonies took place. It was also the center of Royally sponsored Buddhist monastic education in the kingdom before the French begin establishing official colonial control in 1893.

Although Vat Mai was most likely the largest monastery in the pre-colonial period it was not the first. Vat Vixun in Luang Phrabang is the earliest known formal Buddhist monastic school. It was built under the supervision of King Vixun in 1503.[2] It housed the ritually powerful Buddha image – the *Phra Bang Chao*. The king, his scribes and senior monks believed that the Buddha himself had predicted that a great king would sit on the stone throne on the very grounds where King Vixun had the monastery established. The monastery sits near the base of the Phu Si Hill in the center of Luang Phrabang. Phu Si represents the axis mundi (Mount Sumeru) of the Buddhist/Hindu world and is directly opposite the Grand Palace of Luang Phrabang on the other side of the hill. This strategic placing and the legitimizing chronicle that attends the monastery and its main image were part of King Vixun's efforts to make Luang Phrabang an attractive center of the Theravada Buddhist ritual, scholarship and art, and remind us of similar efforts that were being made in Chiang Mai and Ayutthya at this time.[3] Famous monks brought wealthy patrons, increased trade, manpower, artists, devotees, pilgrims, etc. Kings certainly saw it advantageous and prestigious to keep the best educated, most regionally connected, most influential (and therefore, most dangerous) teachers and students close. The monastic schools profited from this arrangement as well since they received royal gifts, protection, patronage, and good food. There probably were dozens of smaller more rural monastic schools, but, because they left no record we only know about the ones the royal family supported.

At Vat Vixun ordained, shaven-headed, saffron-robe clad, male novice students (Pali: sāmañera), would have most likely studied outside under the shade of a wooden sala on hot days or in the vihara.[4] Informal lessons in front of the kuṭi (monastic cell) which are common in monasteries today would have also been the norm. Male monk teachers (Pali: *ācariya*) would read from palm-leaf manuscripts and the students would repeat the text verbatim, practice writing themselves, and learn how to use Pali terms and passages for rituals, chanting, meditative mantras, and as triggers to vernacular lessons on history, ethics, medicine, magic, cosmology, and grammar. Examinations were most likely oral expositions of memorized passages and questions about the meanings of Pali terms and Buddhist ethical and teachings. A solid knowledge (memorization) of the *Paṭimokkha* (monastic disciplinary code) would have been an essential part of this training.[5]

The students at Vat Vixun would have been particularly well trained, because when the monastery was dedicated in 1506 the King invited several high ranking monks and donated several large rice fields and a large quantity of silver to help support the students and teachers.[6] One of these teachers was (Phra) Maha Dep Luang Chao (also known as Dhamma Sena Chao) who composed one section of the famous Lao history, the *Nithan Khun Borom* (composed in the Lao vernacular). He had originally lived at Vat Manoram, where the *Phra Bang Chao* image was kept and moved with it to Vat Vixun. We can imagine that some of his students moved as well or lived at Vat Manoram and studied with him at Vat Vixun as these monasteries are very close to each other. The movement of teachers and students was quite common as it still is. The king was so impressed with him that he promoted him the leadership of the entire sangha, thus making Vat Vixun the ceremonial, symbolic and educational center of the emerging regional power. King Vixun himself ordained for a short time at this monastery and sponsored manuscript production there and at other monasteries.[7] Clearly monastic education was of central concern to the king and it benefited the monks to stay close to the royal family in the city, although there is one report in which the king sent a monk to study at a rural ho *tai* (library; literally "hall of the *tipiṭaka*") whose location is unknown.

Vat Vixun's school was a center for a number of literate monks. After King Vixun's death, his son, King Phothisarat increased the prestige of Vat Vixun by inviting the scholar monk, Mahā Sīchantho to be the Supreme Patriarch and be the abbot of Vat Vixun. This monk was personally responsible for the king's Buddhist instruction.[8] He also invited many scholar monks from Chiang Mai to bring copies of the Buddhist *Tipiṭaka* (Buddhist "canon") and "other texts" to the monastery. We do not know exactly which of these texts were used in King Phothisarat's training, but the monastic manuscript library holds many and varied texts. Very few date back to the time of the king's training in 1523 (when shipment from Chiang Mai came), but undoubtedly, many of these texts formed the basis of the monastery's curriculum.[9] It is important to note that like Lao monastic archives in general, the vast majority of manuscripts held in the library of Vat Vixun are non-canonical. In fact, only twelve of the 101 manuscripts found at the monastery in 1912 were composed in Pali. Many are mixed Lao and Pali pedagogical manuscripts – *nissaya-type*. Only five of the twelve are canonical (the *Mahāvagga*, the *Buddhamant, Cakkanibāt, Dhammachak* and the *Dighanikāya*). The *Dighanikāya* in this instance is only a brief Pali summary of the contents of the canonical *Dighanikāya* and the *Mahāvagga* is an incomplete section of the Vinaya. The *Cakkanibāt* is the fourth section of the *Jātaka*, the *Dhammachak* is the *Dhammacakkapaṭṭhāna Sutta* and the *Buddhamant* is an extra-canonical collection of canonical *paritta* (or protective) texts. The other seven Pali manuscripts are commentarial or known only locally. These texts certainly do not constitute even a small part of or are even in the Buddhist *Tipiṭaka*.

Even if we know little about the institutional administration or educational policies of Vat Mai, Vat Manoram, or Vat Vixun. The library at Vat Mai in Luang Phrabang provides insight into the contours of the Lao Buddhist curriculum during and after King Phothisarat reign. Vat Mai holds one of the largest collections of manuscripts in all of Laos. Of the more than 1,100 manuscripts more than eighty percent are in Lao. Although most of these manuscripts were composed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we can still be fairly sure that the king's, as well as most other students, education was one centered on the vernacular exposition of both Pali and Lao religious and secular texts. If the libraries holdings are any indication of the institutional objectives of this and other monasteries then the teachers saw the dissemination of Buddhist narratives, Buddhist histories, ritual texts, and sermons drawn from the *Abhidhamma* as their primary goal.

Two of these monasteries in the central Lao city of Vientiane, Vat Inpeng and Vat Ong Teu, were, and still are, centers of scholarly activity and ritual. We do not know the exact dates of the construction of Vat Inpeng because of the massive destruction of it and almost every other monastery in Vientiane at the hands of Siamese armies in 1827. Vat Inpeng was burnt that year, but the basic layout of the monastery was rebuilt modeled on the original (in fact, its reconstruction is still underway in present-day Vientiane and monks still study through the sounds of hammering, drilling, and sanding). Its vihara, next to the library, has a large covered veranda and would have been a convenient and cool place to study. The most unique feature of Vat Inpeng is its manuscript library. Tham Sayasithsena, relates a story, for which he does not provide a source, in which the famous Lao King Fa Ngum installed the *Phra Bang Chao* image at Vat Inpeng.[10] The image, the story goes, was carried with the Buddhist *Tipiṭaka* (again it does not say which actual texts or if they were Pali or Lao or Khmer) on a boat up the Mekhong River from Cambodia. A Cambodian monk, Maha Pasmanta Thera, carried the image and performed a ceremony marking its installation on Done Can Island near Vientiane (then called Vieng Kham). When moving the statue from the island to the city it sank under the weight of its gold and magically re-appeared on the grounds of Vat Inpeng. Later the *Phra Bang Chao* was moved to Luang Phrabang (first Vat Vixun and later the National Museum). When the *Phra Bang Chao* was moved North, the hall that was built to house it was renamed the library. Here we see the connection between the kingdom's palladium, its king, and a major monastery. Perhaps the Buddhist texts placed in this library were seen as an adequate replacement for the image. Chronicles suggest that the ritual and educational centers for the kingdom were closely related. While many of the details in this story are most likely conflated from a mixture of legends, political agendas, and actual events, it forms the basis of legitimacy for the existence of the monastery and attracts many patrons, teachers and students.

This Khmer style library, which still stands, is one of the best examples in the country. Manuscript surveys revealed a large collection of texts, again mostly extra-canonical vernacular texts (two out of fifty-eight are in Pali and the two Pali texts are extra-canonical ritual manuals). These manuscripts are mostly pedagogical *nissayas* used in daily monastic instruction and confirm the fact that Vat Inpeng was a major learning center in pre-modern Laos.[11] At present Vat Inpeng is a center for Buddhist students who study there and at Vat Ong Teu less than fifty meters away on the same street.

Ong Teu means "Very Heavy (Buddha) Statue." The monastery was named after a large Buddha image that King Sethathirat ordered cast in 1569. Originally the statue was supposed to be housed in Vat Inpeng, but there is a legend that the Burmese army was poised to attack Vientiane and the Queen Chirapapha suggested that the king ask the Burmese to delay their attack until the statue was complete. Using this added time, the Queen planned to trick the Burmese. She had magicians cast a spell on the Burmese soldiers as they slept on the opposite side of the Mekhong River from Vientiane. The spell allowed Lao soldiers to sneak into their camp and paint their throats with white powder. When the Burmese soldiers woke up they could not figure out why their necks were painted white. Lao spies hiding among them told them that the Lao king himself sneaked into their camp and painted their necks white to demonstrate that he could have slit their throats while they slept, but he was merciful. Therefore, the Burmese respected the Lao king and his power and decided to make a peace treaty instead of burning the city. The king and queen invited the Burmese to partake in the merit accrued through casting the giant Buddha image. This image was considered so magnificent that an entire new monastery was built to house it – Vat Ong Teu. No matter the veracity of the story, the monastery, especially its monastic school, quickly rose to prominence in the city.[12]

Vat Ong Teu grew during the reign of King Surinyavong (1638-1695). Although, like the various noblemen of in Chiang Mai, Lampang, and Nan, King Surinyavong was paying tribute to the Burmese, he ruled over a fifty-seven year period of relative peace and prosperity. He used this time to invest a great amount of royal funds in Buddhism. By the end of his reign the Vientiane had become the premier center of Buddhist education in the region attracting monks, according to manuscript colophons, from Northern Thailand (Lan Na), as well as Shan, Khoen and Leu territories. Hundreds of manuscripts were brought into the region, and new monasteries were built and well patronized.

Although we do not have much direct evidence of the education system at Vat Ong Teu before the twentieth century, we do have descriptions by traveling European missionaries and traders. Gerrit van Wuysthoff, a Dutch merchant, traveled from Batavia (modern Jakarta, Indonesia), to forge a trading relationship with King Surinyavong. Although he was not very interested in Buddhism, he wrote that monks in the city were "as numerous as the soldiers of the Emperor of Germany." He also noted that many of the monks in the city were from Cambodia and Siam who were studying in the monasteries of Vientiane.[13] If his observations are correct, they may have attracted by the patronage of the king and the teachers and texts available. Father Giovanni-Marie Leria (as transmitted by his colleague Father G.F. de Marini) gives the only explicit description we have of monastic life before Lefèvre. He visited monastic schools and attended sermons and rituals. He speaks of examinations that monks had to pass at the age of twenty-three in which the monks had to summarize their knowledge of Buddhist teachings and rituals. There is no other supporting record that these exams took place, how they were conducted, judged, or their specific content. Leria disparagingly comments only "most of this [examination] is only posturing and an ostentation rather than a demonstration of their scholarship and abilities." Besides studying to prepare for ceremonies and public chanting, Leria reports, that the monks use their studies to practice protective magic to produce holy water, medicinal "potions," and protect themselves against wild animals. He also only reports the monks' teachings on vernacular texts describing heavens and hells, the origin of the kingdom, the life story of the Buddha, the importance of giving alms, the nature and reasons for rebirth, and the rewards one would receive in the next life for meritorious actions in this life. We learn nothing more of what or how the monks studied in seventeenth century Vientiane. The teachings he describes were clearly drawn from *Jātaka* stories of the previous lives of the Buddha which describe the benefits of meritorious acts "of man and of the gods, under a thousand fabulous appearances." From the content of manuscript libraries we can speculate that other stories were probably drawn from the *Dhammapada-Atthakathā* and apocryphal *Jātakas* and vernacular narratives in which charity (*dāna*) and other acts of merit are the main themes, but also describe heavens and hells. In addition to these, vernacular texts like the *Nithan Khun Borom, Xin Sai, Siang Miang*, and other Lao folktales and legends in which "the origins of the world" and "legendary monsters" could have been included in their sermons and studies. This is confirmed by the content of texts from the period. Rituals texts that guided ordinations, house blessing, new robe offerings, healing and protective rites like the *kammavācā, paritta,* and *ānisansa* genres texts must have also been included since "magic," and "holy water," in Leria's words, were the chief "superstitions" of the Lao "talapoins" (monks).

Records show that during Father Leria's time in Vientiane, there was a great manuscript production and the monasteries were full of students. Like other centers of learning the vernacular pedagogical texts (*nissayas* and *nāmasaddas*) formed the basis of the curriculum. These instructional manuals used in oral performance were drawn from the *Abhidhamma*, *Paññāsa Jātaka* (Lao: *Ha Sip Chat*), *Vessanatara Jātaka*, and romantic local epics like the *Siao Savat, Xin Sai, Phra Lak Phra Ram* (Lao version of the Rāmayāna), and *Thao Hung Thao Chuang*. This mixing of romantic/secular epics poems and Buddhist canonical and non-canonical texts is common in Lao education and entertainment.[14] Vat Ong Teu in particular possesses a large collection of *Chalong* manuscripts. "*Chalong*" means "ceremony" or "celebration." These texts, like the *Chalong Dok Mai* (Flower [offering] Ceremony), *Chalong Buddharup* (Buddha Image [offering] Ceremony), *Chalong Kathin* (Monastic Robes [offering] Ceremony) attest to the major role Vat Ong Teu has played in the ritual, as well as educational, life of the city. One in particular, the *Chalong Pidok* (Buddhist *Tipiṭaka* Text [offering] Ceremony) is particularly important since Vat Ong Teu has been one of the major centers of textual study and religious instruction since its inception.[15]

By the time Lefèvre arrived in Luang Phrabang the monastic schools of Laos had over 400 years of development. Besides pedagogical manuscripts there is little we can know about this history. The French established colonial control in Laos in 1893 and based their primary administrative offices for Indochine in Vietnam. Ideally in each French designated town there were one public *école cantonale* (primary school) and in the major French administrative regions there were *écoles d'arrondissement* (district schools) which were supposed to be directed by a French-born teacher and overtime assisted by native teachers. In Vientiane, Savannakhet, Luang Phrabang, and Paksé there were eventually Catholic schools and major urban centers had one *école cantonale*.[16] These schools were primarily run by Vietnamese hired by the French. A small percentage of the students at these schools were women. Even for men, school was not an important option for Lao families under the French. A few elite Lao, like King Sisavangvong and S.P. Nginn, studied in Paris, but most common Lao women and men had little commerce with French schools. The French did little to effect the day-to-day activity at Buddhist monasteries.[17] In short, French records tell us little about the schedules, duties, examinations, pedagogical methods, curricular content, etc. of monastic students and teachers. However, although they did not actively support country-wide monastic education they invested in the study of Buddhism, Lao history, linguistics, epigraphy, archaeology, and art history.

The *École française l'Extrême-Orient* (EFEO), which was founded in Saigon in 1898, sent French scholars to Laos in the early part of the twentieth century to research in the vast manuscript archives and analyze the Buddhist and other monuments.[18] Louis Finot, the first great French scholar of Laos, composed the first major catalogue of Lao palm-leaf manuscripts.[19] In the first half of the twentieth century, unlike EFEO scholars in Indonesia and Vietnam, there was less focus on ethnography and contemporary history and more on Buddhist texts, architecture, and images. It seems that palm-leaf and stone were more important to foreign Buddhologists than the actual lives of Buddhist monks. How Lao monks used these texts in practice was of no interest. The focus on Buddhist texts and learning in general led the EFEO not only to catalogue manuscripts, but also to promote the composition and preservation of, especially Pali texts. To this end, in 1922 under the influence of Finot, the Cambodian King Sisovath and the résident supérieur of Laos, agreed to establish the *Ecole* *supérieure de pâli* under the patronage of the EFEO. This focus on a Pali school was due to the general attitude that Pali was the "original" and thus superior Buddhist language of learning. Even though Finot's own survey concluded that Pali composition and commentary was not a primary part of the Lao Buddhist intellectual heritage, the EFEO saw Pali instruction as their priority. The Pali language was seen as tying the regions populated by Sri Lankan and Mon influenced "Theravada" Buddhism (Sri Lanka, Siam, Burma, the Shan States, Sipsongpanna, Northern Thailand, Laos, Cambodia) together. Moreover, the general attitude among Western Buddhologists in the early twentieth century was that contemporary Lao Buddhism had unfortunately been cut from its Indic roots and had become corrupted with animist and other local beliefs. This focus on Pali also placed Laos as derivative to other Theravada kingdoms in Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia, and Siam.

It is difficult to define the colonial "influence" on the study of Lao Buddhism or Lao intellectual and literary life in general. There wasn't one model of a good colonist as there wasn't one model of what made a good monastic student. There certainly seems to be little direct colonial influence on Lao monastic education. The wide variety of classical and vernacular texts and the dynamic integration of textual and ritual practices seen in Lao monasteries past and present has generally been reflected in the scholarship. In Laos, the convenient division between the pre-modern and the modern or the pre-and post-colonial is of limited use. The Lao sangha wasn't placed under official French authority until 5 September 1927. The first article of the religious code referred to education and stated that the French were to assure that the Lao monks maintained their rituals and preserved their monasteries. Furthermore, they were supposed "to develop, in light of an intellectual and moral recovery of the people, the monastery school where the children receive the first parts of their education." Besides these administrative rules, there is very little mention of monastic life besides four articles in the general French colonial "resolution on religious affairs." This resolution was not a stringent (and there is no evidence that it was actually enforced) set of rules. Lay children were expected to learn basic mathematics and Lao vernacular reading and writing. Novices were expected to learn how to read and write in the Lao vernacular and monks were expected to know Lao and the old Buddhist script – Tham. Knowledge of Pali grammar or the ability to translate and compose Pali texts was not required. Moreover, the minimal curricular requirements (which, again, we have no evidence of them being enforced) were not more than more or any different from standard pre-colonial texts.

Laos gained independence from the French in 1954. French scholars remained in Laos, but central administrative control of monasteries ceased to be enforced and it was not until the Marxist takeover by the Pathet Lao party in 1975 that Buddhist educational institutions were monitored and administered by the state. The latter half of the twentieth century has seen a significant decline in the population and patronage of Lao monasteries.

For the sake of space, I must be brief, but between 1954 and 1975, despite the rise in printing in Laos and the growth in anthropological and economic interest in Laos by foreign, especially American, scholars, there still are very few descriptions of the day-to-day monastic life in Laos.[20] Several older Lao scholars who had been (and some still are) monks in Laos in the 1960s told me that education was relatively informal, but ritual life, especially for house blessings, *su khwan* ceremonies (healing ceremonies in which a person's "khwan" or internal energy was called back into their body), and funerals.[21]

Although monastic life in Laos after 1954 can be called informal at best, there are some basic institutional facts that are available. Between 1959 and 1975 American "advisors" were ubiquitous in Laos. They saw the monastery as one place where the "hearts and minds" of the Lao populace could be "won" and turned against the red menace. Buddhism had been made the "state religion" by the royal government after independence from the French in 1947. An American scholar, Joel Halpern, observed that the royal government used "suppressive measures" to control Buddhist teachers who were opposed to the government.[22] In May 1959 a royal ordinance stated that all "correspondence between administrative levels of the sangha had to pass through government channels. Even the appointment of the *Phra Sangharaja* while made by the monarch, was subject to procedures involving the Ministry of Religious Affairs." Gunn notes that the Americans had encouraged these actions and had also actively recruited monks in their fight against communist insurgents.[23]

These efforts to modernize and internationalize the Lao sangha were not merely the results of American anti-communist machinations. In fact, they can be seen as connected to indigenous Lao nationalism and the growth of nationalism and "development" monks across the river in Thailand. The most significant Lao monastic national movement that was linked to changes in monastic education was the Buddhavong Association (Samakhom Buddhavong) and the Buddhist Youth School of Laos (Honghian Oplom Sinsilatham Buddhayaovason Lao) founded by Phra Mahapan Anantho (lay name: Pan Kaeochumphu) on 22 May 1959. This popular monk, especially in Vientiane, was born into a rice farming family in rural Savannakhet in 1911. He traveled to Bangkok to study Buddhism. The efforts of Phra Mahapan Anantho to reform Lao Monastic Education and spread Buddhist teachings to Lao youth were certainly influenced by his schooling in Thailand. Phra Mahapan collected Abhidhamma material at Mahachulalongkorn Monastic University in Bangkok and received the rank of Udombarinya (one the highest ranks in Thailand). There is no record that I have found that stated he passed ecclesiastical examinations in Thailand, but it is said that he studied up to the eighth level (*prayok baet*) at Vat Chanthabuli in Vientiane, but since there were not regular examinations there, I am not sure how his level was determined.[24] From his writings, of which there are several short books clearly drawn from Thai textbooks for youth (see chapters three and five), a book on Lao customs, and dozens of collected sermons, he certainly was more interested in spreading meditation practice and teaching social responsibility, rather than Pali language or Buddhist history.[25] This is confirmed in the newspaper account of his funeral which stated that he studied nine years of *vipassana* meditation which had experienced a popular revival in Thailand at that time. In 1961, it is reported that he traveled to India to participate in a worldwide Buddhist ecumenical meeting and in 1963 he visited Cambodia.

In 1967, Phra Mahapan summarized the association's objectives.[26] The document reads: "To support Buddhism and to maintain the good tradition and culture of the nation; to study, research, plan and propagate Dharma to all organizations in the nation; to coordinate with other organizations with the same aims; to study the ways how to construct and restore the temples and public places; to look for funds; to assist and promote the youth to be able to study Dharma, culture and the traditions of the nation; to help poor children; to extend the activities at home and abroad and to cooperate with all Buddhist Organizations all over the world."[27] To these ends they published fifty-eight short volumes Buddhavong magazine, ran a weekly radio program, organized 300 public lectures, opened five branches of an Abhidhamma school, opened a library with "about 3,000 books," opened an orphanage, opened dozens of *vipassana* mediation centers, (ten in Vientiane alone) and opened fifteen schools for lay and ordained youth with approximately 3690 students (very similar to Mahānikāya projects sponsored by monks at Wat Mahathat and Wat Rakhang Khositaram in Bangkok in the 1950s). Besides students, they also claimed to have 687 adult members of the association spread out over ten provinces (370 of which lived in Vientiane). While these numbers are certainly exaggerated and the Buddhavong magazine was never a substantial publication, it shows the extent of this project which was neither the brainchild of the Americans nor the French.[28]

Turning specifically to the schools connected with the association, the first was founded on 9 August 1959 at Vat Paluang under the direction of Phra Mahapan himself. He claimed inspiration for the school from the Buddhist Youth School of Sri Lanka which he had visited in 1958. Subsequent branches were opened by Phra Maha Khampui Sirimangalo, Phra Maha Inpeng Busaba, Phra Maha Thong Khun Tuthathammo, Phra Maha Khampui Sisavat, Phra Maha Khamlek, and many others between 1966 and 1971. Lay scholars like Kaeo Viphakon and Bualy Chandara were also involved in the school management. These schools started a school newspaper, opened "Sunday Schools" (another Sri Lankan influence), composed nationalistic Buddhist songs, put on Buddhist "plays" and dances, started *vipassana* meditation classes (similar to those growing in popularity in Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, and Sri Lanka at the time), performed charitable "social welfare," and sponsored debates. These activities were completely foreign to traditional Lao monastic education.[29] A Lao language poster distributed in Vientiane on 5 March 1972 summarized sums up their activities. The poster advertised the Buddhavong Association's and the Buddhist Youth School's support of the Lao nation and parliament. It calls Buddhism the "national religion" (Sasana Phacham Chat Lao). In honor of their allegiance to the state and the youth of the nation they put on a festival of traditional dance, music, Buddhist chanting, sports, and a procession from the famous stupa of Thāt Luang to the Parliament Building linking the future of the nation with the future of Buddhist education.

During this period, many members of the Lao sangha traveled abroad to study or to meet with high ranking government and religious figures in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Cambodia. For example, Mahapan himself wrote a book on his travels to Sri Lanka, *Sing thi dai phop hen nai langka thavip* (1966). This book contains one of the only photographic records of Mahapan's travels. There is a photograph of the prime minister of Sri Lanka offering Mahapan a gift and descriptions of his meetings with different Sri Lankan monks. There are a few Lao translations of Thai Buddhist texts that emerged in this period as well, like Leuam Thamxot's translation of Phra Sunntthamrangsi Khamphiramethachan's *Dhammabanyai bang suan* (Vientiane, 1969). This is a Lao summary of some of Phra Sutthuthamrangsi's progressive sermons on the importance of monk's social engagement. Leuam claims to have been close friends with Phra Sutthithamrangsi since 1959 and sought to bring the latter's teaching to the people of Laos. The Buddhavong Magazine, besides providing a good source of texts and teachings common in the capital at the time, also have numerous editorials about "khao nok prathet" (international news) which reported on religion and government policy in the United States, Buddhism in Korea, and religious sites in India to name just a few examples. These volumes are a rare font of information into the many and varied views of leading intellectual monks and religiously devout laypeople in Laos in the post-colonial/pre-Marxist period. Furthermore, one of the only known pre-1980 textbooks for Lao monastic students, *Banha Vinai Phak 1* [Problems in the Vinaya vol. I (as far as I know no other volume was printed)] was composed by a Lao monk, Phra Maha Sikham Vorachit, who, it proudly states on the cover, received his bachelor's degree from India. The cover also depicts a hand drawn formal classroom with a monk seated at a desk and rows of students in front of him also seated at desks with a map of Laos on the wall, and a flag and globe in the front of the classroom.[30]

This Buddhist youth education movement, the growing international visibility of Lao monks, the American "clandestine" operations, as well as the efforts of the royal government, had little long-term or wide-spread effect though on the lives of students and teachers in monasteries. The Abhidhamma schools are gone, the youth school branches have been closed or transformed into traditional monastic secondary schools, and only the remnants of the Buddhavong Association are seen at Vat Paluang on the outskirts of Vientiane. *Vipassana* classes (and herbal saunas) have grown in popularity in the tourist areas, and at certain "progressive" monasteries like Vat Nakon Noi and Vat Paluang in the Vientiane province, but are associated more with informal lay education than institutionalized monastic education.[31] Laos, especially the rural areas, had a deeply depressed economy during these years, rural and urban monastic schools operated largely undisturbed until American bombs began falling by the thousands in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many of my Lao teachers attended monastic schools in the 1960s and 70s before the Marxist takeover. However, the rise of secular education under the French and later royal interwar government and the "cave" schools during run by the communists during American bombing raids did draw students away from monastery schools. Christian Taillard and Georges Condominas, working in Laos in the early 1970s, noted that the rural monastery was the major center of education in villages, but its universal hold on education in Laos was slowly being replaced.[32] Secular education grew under the French between 1893 and 1949 and had grown under the royal and communist governments between 1947 and the present have reduced the educational role of the monastery.[33]

In 1975, Laos, like Cambodia and Vietnam, was "liberated" by or "fell" to Marxist rebels – the Pathet Lao. The Pathet Lao were the Lao equivalent of the Vietminh/Vietcong in Vietnam and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. However, their interpretation of social reform and Marxism differed from their Indochinese comrades. Looking specifically at their policies regarding Buddhist education, the Pathet Lao (later the Lao People's Democratic Republic – Satharana Pasason Pathet Lao) subsumed the sangha under the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Religious Affairs headed by Phoumi Vongvichit, while the party was in the jungle fighting royalist and American forces. In December 1975, when the party was on the verge of defeating the American-backed royalist government they held the National Congress of People's Representatives. The president of the new government, Kaysone Phomvihan, spoke to the congress, six of whom were monks themselves, and urged them "in order to contribute actively to reviving the spirit of patriotic union, encourage the population to increase production and to economize, help in educating people so as to raise their cultural standard, contribute to persuading, educating and correcting those who do not live virtuously or misbehave, so that become good citizens."[34] This veiled warning to the sangha was quickly followed by a series of restrictive reforms. First, the populace was banned from offering food to monks and novices in the morning which eliminated the primary way for the laity to make merit. Second, the teaching of Buddhism was banned in all schools. Third, members of the sangha were told to till the soil and be self-sufficient that ostensibly removed their ritual, ethical, and social significance since the mere act of tilling soil involved breaking the very precepts that made a person a monk. Pro-actively, the government forced members of the sangha to attend monthly indoctrination seminars (about seven days long with about thirty-five senior monks from the capital), where monks were told that they should "actively contribute in transmitting the policies of the Party and the State, educating young people and providing medical care for the population." They were also encouraged to "study politics to consolidate their political background and make it conform to progressive revolutionary politics. This will enable them to more easily integrate themselves into the revolutionary rank."[35] Martin Stuart-Fox notes that many of these monks did "integrate" themselves. For example, (Phra) Khamtam Depbuali announced to a delegation of visiting Vietnamese monks at the annual Thāt Lūang festival that "the Buddhist monk has the capacity to become a revolutionary, sharing the tasks of the nation and people."[36]

Being a revolutionary did not preclude the monks from their role as teachers or from their own study, but it did transform it. Phoumi Vongvichit declared in October 1976 that Buddhist monks assigned to teach the people in rural areas must understand the people who attend their sermons. They must select an appropriate sermon to give the people in order to change their line of thinking...they should mix the themes of current politics and Buddhist politics in giving sermons and using present examples . . . the policy of the Party and the government is . . . to request Buddhist monks to give sermons to teach the people and encourage them to understand that all policies and lines of the Party and the government are in line with teachings of the Lord Buddha so that the people will be willing to follow them. Thus there will be no lazy people, thieves, or liars in our country.

This standard fear of "ancient times," the condescending attitude toward the general populace ability to understand the "present reality," and the call to "work hard" seen in all revolutionary literature is too transparent to warrant commentary, but it is important to note that the Lao Communist Party, unlike its contemporaries in Cambodia did not completely eliminate Buddhist education but attempted to revolutionize it. Monks were constantly informed that Buddhism and socialism were congruent and complementary since they promoted equality, communal sharing and the objective of ending suffering. The Buddha himself sacrificed his own wealth by leaving his family and palace for the sake of all sentient/socialist beings; therefore, monks and novices should walk in the Buddha's footprints and work for the people. The teaching of Buddhism, even with a Marxist veneer, was formalized and closely monitored. The sangha was re-organized under the "Lao Union of Buddhists." Monks were enlisted by the government to teach the youth and adults how to read and write as part of "campaign for the elimination literacy."[37] They also were told to head public seminars to encourage the people to trust the government and wholeheartedly incorporate their new policies into their daily lives.

In order to ensure adherence to these policies, the government initiated a two-step program to educate the monks and novices and dismantle their power base and structure. There was no overall organization for Lao Buddhist education. Each monastery largely educated its monks and novices in its own way based on the texts available, ritual and homiletic demands, and the particular lineage of teachers and teachings passed down from generation to generation. While there are certain similarities that bind Lao Buddhist teachings and teachers together, there was no formal institutional unity, curriculum or educational governance. Therefore, the Party decided to formalize Buddhist schooling while infusing it with socialist teachings. What the party failed to realize is that they weren't returning to a pristine pre-colonial state, but that Lao monastic education had never been formally organized.

Vat Ong Teu, being a traditional center of Buddhist education, was particularly seen as a place that needed reform. It was the largest single monastic school with 341 students in 1979. First, monks were commanded to submit their books to the Party for censorship. Manuscripts were largely ignored since most monks and certainly most Party officials could not read them in the "ancient" (Tham) script. The texts had to be inline with what Lafont calls the "three principles – not to sin [i.e. the five precepts against lying, stealing, sexual misconduct, inebriation and killing]; to increase one's excellence; and to purify one's own heart – all of which are compatible with Marxism-Leninism."[38] They were banned from teaching the concept of karma or merit to ensure that the people did not waste their resources on giving food to monks and to the upkeep of statues and temples. Furthermore, they were banned from teaching about heavens, hells or *phi* (ghosts or spirits). The Buddhist cosmology based on thirty-three heavens and eight hells occupied gods, goddesses, munificent and nefarious ethereal spirits was criticized and the teaching based on temple murals which often depicted these worlds and their various fantastic denizens was forbidden. All monasteries, including Vat Ong Teu, were "given directives" according to the revolutionary congress "whereby they will function in conformity with the orientation of national education." Rumors that twenty monks had been executed by the Party in Champassak province in Southern Laos in May, 1978 and that two other monks critical of the Party had "disappeared" may have contributed to the general decline in monk population. After 1975 there was a significant decrease in the numbers of monks in Laos. Martin Stuart-Fox notes:

> Pagodas left with no monks were taken over as [secular] schools. Some were even reported to have been used on occasion as barracks and storage barns. Buddha images and other ritual objects from these monasteries were consigned to museums . . . An important overall effect of government measures was to break down the key relationship between monks and the lay community that had sustained the position of the Sangha in traditional lay society . . . Refugees claimed that monks complied out of fear: even if there was no known PL official present, it was taken for granted that there would be some informer in the audience. The traditional Pali formula of homage to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha was all but replaced by repetition of the five ideals of the Lao People's Democatic Republic.[39]

The most recent governmental guidelines to religion in Laos is summarized by the "Lao Front for National Construction" (LFNC) which is a branch of the Lao communist government and manages affairs for the relatively new "Department of Religious Affairs." In 2003 it published, oddly enough in English versus Lao, its new guidelines for Lao religious institutions written by Maha Khampheuy Vannasopha. These policies are based on Article 9 of the Constitution approved on 15 August 1991 (updated in 1995). This English publication most likely reflects the need to convince the World Trade Organization and the United Nations of its promotion of civil rights and religious freedom. Indeed the second half of the sixty-five page document has letters of support from Evangelical Christian, Bahai, Cambodian Buddhist, and Catholic churches operating in Laos. They are explicit attempts to prove that the Lao government does not oppress religion. As the publication states, religion is seen as a useful part of the LFNC's efforts to "enhance the tradition of patriotism, loving the regime [sic], make people be proud of the nation, create a spirit of self-reliance, self-autonomy, enhance unity among the entire Lao people including the Lao expatriates." Although this document discusses Islamic, Christian, Taoist, and other religious institutions in Laos, its main focus is on Buddhism. It states that Buddhist education is important because "temples used to play a partial role for teaching; it was a place to educate the public to behave themselves in dharma, to be kind, hospitable towards each other and avoid bad behavior . . . Under the light of the revolution, the Monks and Buddhists have strictly behaved by the dharma principle of Buddha; have jointed in the nationalism procession, contended with the imperialism and colonialism for national liberation." Institutionally the LFNC instituted a new policy to issue identity cards to all monks, novices, and nuns (as well as Christian and Islamic clergy) and register all "movable and immovable properties" at places of religious practice. Speaking of the Lao government's role in protecting Buddhism and all religious groups, the text continues "the propaganda—training of the Central Party Committee and Lao Front for National Construction are assigned to cooperate to lay down the contents and education methods to enable a suitable system to advise all sectors." Article 14 specifically states that "the printing of books, documents for dissemination, signs and various plates related to religion shall be authorized by the Ministry of Information and Culture with the approval of the Central Committee" of the LFNC. Furthermore, "it is forbidden for believers in the Lao PDR to publish or possess books, documents, photographs, signs, video cassettes, VCD, films or other media having characteristics of superstitions, pornography, distortions of truth, slandering or obstructing the progress of the nation." In addition to these restrictions, all monastic building, communication with foreigners, study tours, etc. must be approved by the LFNC. These institutional changes are reminiscent, although more ecumenical and with different rhetoric, of the policies of King Phothisarat and the Résident Supérieure of France. However, just like the institutional changes brought on by their predecessors, the LFNC's policies have not changed seriously the way that Buddhism is taught or the choice of texts and methods on the ground.[40]

Today, the government will not allow the sangha institutional freedom and monks are not freely allowed to enter the monkhood without permission (nunhood, buat *mae* chi or *buat mae sin*, has all but disappeared in Laos; however, more monks are entering monastic schools in Vientiane, Savannakhet and Luang Phrabang and even rural monasteries are frequented more often. The active sermon tradition of the pre-communist era has been curtailed and education in many rural areas has been replaced by ritual (which certainly have educational content as well as we will see below) occasions like funerals, weddings, house blessings and calendrical rituals like the *Bun Ban Fai* and *Bun Phra Vet*, but there are signs of greater activity in the educational practices of monks. Government policy recently has remained strict in presentation, but weak in actual implementation.

For example, recently monks in Vientiane, as well as Savannakhet and Pakxé have published printed copies of their sermons (Pali: *desanā*) alongside the more common ritual liturgical handbooks. Monks at these monasteries tell me that there has been no government interference or crackdown. Many monks and lay scholars have been involved in the collecting, cataloguing, cleaning, copying, preserving and storing of palm-leaf manuscripts funded by German, French and Japanese research organizations and corporations. I sat with the Minister of Information and Culture recently at a Lao Buddhist ceremony to honor the preservation of manuscripts at Vat Na Son near Vientiane. He participated in the rituals and gave a speech thanking the monks and scholars for their efforts. There was no explicit oppression and the Minister himself, like most lay participants, could not read the Tham script of the manuscripts or understand the Pali chanting. Several monks and former monks (in private) have told me that they feel no restrictions, although they did in the 1970s and 80s, on their teachings.

There is still a mood that they should not question the legitimacy of the Party. Although there were efforts to both politicize Lao monks by the ruling elite and efforts by monks like Mahapan Anantho and others to offer their "Buddhist" voice to politicians, there never has been a major sustained Lao "liberation" Buddhist movement, as seen in Islam and Catholicism in other historical contexts, or Theravadan monks at different periods in Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Burma, and Thailand. This does not mean that Buddhism is by nature apolitical in Laos or other places, indeed it is often highly political and revolutionary in many Buddhist countries and cultures. However, in Laos, aside from some isolated local rebellions led by lay "holy men" (*phu mi bun*) in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century in Northeast Thailand near the present-day Lao border there is not simply no evidence that links Buddhism to rebellion in Laos. These holy men were not teachers or students in monasteries. In short, Lao monastic educators have never fostered large scale or consistent rebellion against king, colonialist, or communist.[42]

Still, despite institutional organization, governmental requirements and oversight, many Buddhist pedagogical methods and texts have been little affected by Marxist institutional reform. The Lao sangha has had a long history of overcoming reform, oppression, economic and demographic declines, and government interference. In fact, one wonders if the workings of the Lao Revolutionary Party are much different or any more damaging to religious freedom than periodic royal reforms and French colonial restrictions since the sixteenth century.

Today, Vat Ong Teu is the headquarters of the National Monastic College of Laos and a good place to witness institutional changes in Buddhism. I had the opportunity of attending classes there with some of several hundred novices and fully ordained male students. Institutionally, Vat Ong Teu is the most prestigious center for higher Buddhist learning in the country. The curriculum is striking in its simplicity.

On Mondays students take three courses with three different teachers: Tipiṭaka Studies (*Lao: Traipidok Vichan*), Mathematics (*Kanitsat*) and English (*Phasa Anggit*). On Tuesdays: Writing and Translating Pali (*Taeng-Pae Pali*), Abhidhamma Studies (*Phra Apitham*), "Pattana Sum Son (National Development)," "Borihan Kan Seuksa (Educational Administration)." On Wednesdays: "Writing and Translating Pali," "Sanskrit (Phasa Sansakit)," "Lao Culture (Vattanatham Lao)," "[Current Events from] Newspapers (Kan Kao Nang Seu Phim)." On Thursdays: "English," "Lao Culture" and extra classes in English, Sanskrit and Pali. On Fridays: Mathematics and Pali.

This schedule changes week by week and other classes, like Suttanta Piṭaka Studies (*Phra Suttanta Pidok Vichan*), Vinaya Studies (*Vinai Pidok Vichan*), Ethics (*Thamma Vichan*), Pali Literature (*Vannakhadi Pali*), Lao (*Phasa Lao*), Rhetoric (*Vadasat*), Logic (*Takkasat*), History of Buddhism in Laos (*Pavat Buddhasasana nai Pathet Lao*), Lao Buddhist Art (*Buddhasilapa nai Pathet Lao*), Introduction to Law (*Kotmai dua bai*), Pali Grammar (*Vaiyakon Pali*), Religious Ritual (*Phithikam Thang Sasana*), Editing (Pannalaksat), World Religions (*Sasana dua bai*), Lao Archaeology (*Buhankhadi Lao*), Ancient Lao Script (*Akson Lao Buhan*), Monastic Administration (*Kanpokgong Song Lao*), Pali Translation (*Pae Pali*). Examinations are held every Friday afternoon and there are free (*vang*) periods for group and individual study.[44]

Most of these classes are taught by senior monks, but lay teachers teach English, Sanskrit, educational administration, Lao culture, mathematics, and Lao. Surprisingly, lay teachers also teach Pali Writing and Translation, Pali Translation, and Pali Literature. This writer even gave an impromptu lecture on Pali grammar one afternoon and often tutored students in English and Buddhist history. This curriculum is a major change from the curriculum of the pre-modern period. First, of course, English is a new subject. However, we have no evidence that Sanskrit, law, Lao Buddhist art, religious studies, or archaeology were never taught before the modern period. Since mathematics was part of the first curriculum sanctioned by the French, there is good reason to believe some form of mathematics was taught in the pre-modern period since the French did little to change the curriculum. Courses on Lao Culture, current events ["drawn from newspapers"], national development, educational administration and law are all a part of the Lao national government's efforts to make monks productive members of the proletariat when and if they decide to disrobe (which most do at the age of twenty). As for Pali, it was a major subject in pre-modern monastic education in Laos, but there is no evidence that "Pali Literature" was taught as a general subject.[45] "Literature" as a separate subject of inquiry is certainly modern. In fact, dividing learning into these curricular subject headings is a product of modernity in the region. The secular subjects such as law and mathematics, religious studies and Sanskrit courses in this curriculum closely follow developments in Siamese/Thai monastic educational reform after 1902. Certainly Lao monks and the Lao government were heavily influenced by these Thai developments. Many Lao scholars traveled and studied in Bangkok. During the late nineteenth century many Lao were forcibly moved into central Siam.[46] The famous Lao scholar, Sila Viravong, spent years studying in Bangkok and researching at the National Library of Thailand.[47] Bualy Papaphanh, professor of Lao history and literature, lived and worked in Thailand and many monks at Vat Ong Teu have traveled to their neighboring country (he also received his masters degree in Moscow and his doctorate in Hanoi). One of Prince Wachirayan's books on the role of Buddhism in government was translated from English into Lao by a Lao monk under royal patronage in 1967 (the monk does not give his name and only signs his translation "luksit phu neung [a student])."[48] The *Khu meu samlap phu bolihan vithayalai song* (Handbook for the Administrators of the Monastic College) published in house in 1999 and written by "dean" (phu amnuaikan) (Phra Achan Maha) Puakham Saliput follows closely the format of the official curriculum of Mahachulalongkorn Monastic University in Bangkok. Courses like current events and national development are not found in Thailand, but the curricular format is largely the same. The major difference between modern Thai and modern Lao monastic higher learning is the access and use of textbooks. Lao monastic schools at all levels simply do not have or use many books. More subtle pedagogical differences will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

These institutional modernizations felt indirectly at Vat Ong Teu are certainly not influential outside Vientiane (few other monasteries in Luang Phrabang, Muang Singh, Savannakhet, etc. follow the official Vat Ong Teu curriculum). They certainly are not influential in rural monastic education. For example, Vat Nong Lam Chan in rural Savannakhet province (South-central Laos), despite having one of the largest palm-leaf manuscript libraries in the country, has no formal classes and the abbot merely gives sermons to the three students at the monastery. I attended "classes" with nine novices (ages eight-sixteen) at Vat Don Khong in Champassak Province in the far south of the country. The students simply gathered together in the late afternoon to listen to a sermon and then had secular Lao writing practice books which were hardly used. They were never tested. Pali is not taught except through the gloss and explanation of Pali words in sermons. In fact, two of the students of Vat Nong Lam Chan could not read Lao or Pali. The state of Buddhist education in rural Laos is poor if judged in comparison to Vat Ong Teu's formality, organization and range of courses. Furthermore, rural Laos has very few well-trained teachers (in terms of being able to read and write and having taken classes at an urban or regional secular or monastic school). Many do not even have chairs, classrooms with reliable electricity, textbooks, pencils, blackboards, etc. Three-four students often study with their abbot on the porch of his monastic cell or in the open-air sālās. Sometimes, education takes the form of one-to-one teaching between older and younger monks and novices. It is informal, based on the explanation of Pali terms, deeply connected to quotidian disciplinary and ritual duties, and progress is rarely marked. However, in terms of the subject matter, this should not suggest that there is a great divide in terms of method or sources between Vat Ong Teu and less prominent monastic schools. Despite these modernizations, the manner in which monks and novices are taught at Vat Ong Teu and other Lao monastic schools is reminiscent of the pedagogical methods and textual sources used between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. We need to do more than merely look at the titles of the courses taught at Vat Ong Teu and the amount of electric power in a classroom to see the connections between past and present and trace the history and define the state of Lao Buddhism.

Despite decades of French, American, Russian, and Thai "influence," Lao monastic education has developed and maintained its own unique curriculum.[49] Lao monastic students have had to be creative in the ways they become "educated." For example, on 1 August 2006 I interviewed two first year novice (samanera) students at Vat Ong Teu. Eighteen year olds, Bunthavi Mongphasi from Saravan Province and Phonthavixo Inthilat from Savannakhet Province. The former is studying according to the standard Vat Ong Teu curriculum, but has also crossed the river to study in Thailand. He has also been told that the curriculum might change to match "Bangkok's," which he fears. If this is the case, he might disrobe and become a lay student. The latter studied at Vat Xainyabhum then moved to Vientiane where he studies at Vat Ong Teu, but also studies English on the internet and math with his lay friend. Both agree that they might have to go to Thailand to advance as monks or become lay students at the National University of Laos. Their movement and insatiable search for books and teachers is not a particularly new phenomenon. Students of Buddhism in Laos have long been great innovators of ritual and literature.

Today, with the growth of the Lao economy from Chinese investment and the great rise of tourism, Buddhism is thriving financially in Luang Phrabang and to a much lesser degree in other parts of the country. Furthermore, overseas Lao living in Australia, France, and North America are returning to visit Laos and are making connections between diasporic Lao monasteries and ones in their homeland. Thai and Lao monks have established monastic schools in Australia, Japan, the United States, France, Italy, Great Britain, Canada, Brazil, and New Zealand. Of course there have been Buddhist pilgrims, traveling students, ecumenical meetings, and cultural mixing for over 2,000 years throughout the Buddhist world. However, the frequency, speed, and ease of this exchange has changed dramatically in the last century and especially the last ten years. Lao monks are beginning to participate in international meetings in Thailand, India, and Vietnam. Websites promoting Lao religion and literature have been established, and I now am one of the editors for the first international journal of Lao Studies published by the Center for Laos Studies in the United States. With increased funding and exposure, many changes will certainly be seen in Lao Buddhism over the next few years.

Notes

1 Much of this is adapted from the first chapter of my book, *Gathering Leaves and Lifting Words* (2008) which provides a much fuller account of the history of Lao Buddhism, especially the texts used in Lao Buddhist education and ritual.

2 *Punroeng Puasiisaengpasoet, Pravat silapa lae sathapattayakam lao lem 2: meuang luang phrabang* (Vientiane: Toyota Foundation, 1995): pp.40-41. See also Sila Viravong, *Pavat lao tae buhan theung* 1946 (Vientiane: National Library of Laos and Toyota Foundation, 2001): pp.61-63.

3 I discuss the political uses of relic and Buddha image chronicles in Northern Thailand extensively in McDaniel, "Transformative History," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 25.1 (2002): pp.59-107.

4 See Chirasak Dechavongya, *Khwam sapan ravang lan na lan xang: Kan seuksa silapakam nai meuang chiang mai lae luang phrabang* (Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, 2544 [2001]). The vihara was burnt during a Siamese attack in 1887, but was rebuilt. The original was first described by Doudart de Lagrée in 1866, *Voyage d'Exploration en Indochine* (Paris: Collection Quentin, Bibliothèque des Beaux-Arts, 1984). See also Francis Garnier, *Further Travels in Laos and Yunnan*, composed between 1839-1873 and published as *Voyage d'exploration en Indo-Chine* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1996) and Albert De Pouvourville, *L'Art Indo-Chinois* (Paris: Librairies-Imprimeries Reunies, 1894). Henri Parmentier includes a description in *L'Art du Laos*, édition révisée par Madeleine Giteau (Paris: École français d'extrême-orient, 1988): vol. I, p.76; and plates in vol. II.

5 I discuss some of these rituals in a forthcoming book on Buddhist magic and ghosts, as well as in two entries (on "Paritta" texts and the "History of Lao Buddhism" in the Encyclopedia of Buddhism (2004). For more information on the ways in which Lao Buddhist students were educated using pedagogical manuscripts see McDaniel, *Gathering Leaves and Lifting Words* (2008): chapters 4 and 5.

6 This date is unclear and may have been as late as 1515.

7 Souneth Photisane, "The Nidān Khun Borom" (Ph.D. diss., University of Queensland, 1996): 245.

8 Martin Stuart-Fox, *The Lao Kingdom of Lan Xang* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1998): p.74.

9 Other texts seem to be taken or moved to Burma. Before 1558 intellectual monks, artisans, and scribes were moving to Luang Phrabang. There was a direct political connection between the royal houses of Chiang Mai and Luang Phrabang at this time. For a summary of these chronicles see McDaniel, "Transformative History," pp.59-68. I also provide a bibliography of historical chronicles (in Pali, Thai, Yuan, and French and English translations) by Notton, Ongsakun, Penth, Griswold, Prasert, Coedès, Rattanapan n a, etc. for Northern Thailand here. See also *Pavasat Lao* (Vientiane, 2000): pp.271-274; Deuangsai Luangpasi, *Chao Maha Uparat Bunrong* (Vientiane: Sangon Likhasit, 2003); Deuangsai Luangpasi, *Somdet Phra Chao Sethathirat* (Vientiane: Sangon Likhasit, 1999); (Phra Maha) Mani Rattanapathimakone and (Phra) Rattanaphimpheuang, *Thamnan Phra Kaeo Morakot* (Vientiane: Sangon Likhasit, 1999); Saengthong Photipuppha, *Pavat Muang Xieng Kaeng* (Vientiane: Khong kan botbat raksa nangseu bailan Lao, 1998); Bunroeng Buasisaengbasoet, *Pavatsat silapa lae sathabatthayakamsin Lao* (Vientiane: [no publisher listed], 1995); and, Bunroeng Buasisaengbasoet, *Muang Luang Phrabang* (Vientiane: Toyota Foundation, 1991). This information is drawn from a local history by Luang Pho Kambhirasan (no date) and an inscription from 1812 on the monastic library of Wat Phra Singh (Penth, et al., *Prachum Chāreuk Lān Nā* Vol. 3 (Chiang Mai: Social Research Institute, 2541 [1998]: p.177). The Burmese were not solely to blame for the decline Pali literature in Northern Thailand. I discuss this extensively in McDaniel, "Two Bullets in a Balustrade: How the Burmese have been Removed from Northern Thai History," *Journal of Burma Studies* (August 2007).

10 The veracity of this story has been seriously questioned by Michel Lorrillard, "The Earliest Lao Monasteries according to Philological and Epigraphical Sources," in *The Buddhist Monastery*, ed. Pierre Pichard (Paris: L'École français d'Extrême-Orient, 2003): pp.187-198. Lorrillard also provides a plethora of epigraphical evidence linking Chiang Mai and Vientiane in "Les inscriptions du That Luang de Vientiane," *Bulletin de L'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* 90-91 (2003-2004): p.299.

1 Many of these manuscripts may be held in the National Library of Thailand.

12 Tham Sayasithsena, *Pavat Vat Inpeng Mahavihan* (Bangkok:

Mahachulalongkorn Monastic University Press, 1993): pp.35-50.

13 Stuart-Fox, *Lao Kingdom of Lan Xang*, 94. Grant Evans correctly pointed out (personal communication) that van Wuystoff's observation that Siamese and Cambodian monks were studying in Vientiane at that time are not corroborated. The diversity of the manuscripts and inscriptions produced at this time might suggest mobile and diverse translocal population in the city though.

14 See Peter Koret, "Whispered so Softly" (Ph.D. diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 1994) and Anatole-Roger Peltier, "Les litteratures Lao," *Peninsule* 21 (1990).

15 For historical overviews of nineteenth century Lao history before the arrival of the French see Nou Saiyasittiwong, Volker Grabowsky, Bualy Papapanh, and Khamrung Saenmani, *Pheun Viang Samay Chou Anu* (Vientiane: National University of Laos, 2004).

16 Administratively, Laos was included in the Vicariate Apostolic of Siam until the French made Laos an official colony. After 1899, Mgr. Cuaz, the "Bishop of Hermopolis Minor," was placed in charge of the Lao territory, although, he probably never set foot in the country. The Catholic Church reports that as of 1910 there were 10,682 Catholics in Laos and thirty-three priests (twenty-nine of whom were European). There was only one seminary with eight students, fifty-four churches and chapels, thirty-five schools with 797 pupils; twenty-two orphanages with 304 "inmates." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume VII, 1910, *Bibliotheca Sinica: Essai d'une Bibliographie des ouvrages relatifs à la presqu'île indo-chinoise in T'oung P'ao Archifs pour servir à l'étude de l'Aise Orientale* (2nd series), IV (Leyden,1903—). *Nouvelle Géographie Universelle*, VIII (Paris, 1883), de Lanessan, *La Colonisation française en Indo-Chine* (Paris, 1895), which furthermore gives an excellent account of the state of the French possessions toward the close of the nineteenth century; Henri d'Orléans, *Autor du Tonkin* (Paris,1894), tr. Pitman, Lemire, *Le Laos annamite* (Paris, 1894); Tunier, *Notice sur la Laos français* (Paris, 1900), Madrolle, *Indo-Chine* (guide-book, Paris, 1902); Le Blant, *Les martyrs de Extréme-Orient et les persécutions antiques* (Arras, 1877); Louvet, *La Cochinchine religieuse* (2 vols, Paris, 1885); Dépierre, *Situation de catholicisme en Cochinchine à la fin du XIXe siècle* (Saigon, 1900). I thank Mme. Vachier at the Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer in Aix-en-Provence for advice on this section.

17 Sila Viravong, *Pavatsat Lao*, pp.248-250. Of course, ethnic groups that did not traditionally go to Buddhist monastic rituals and family events (Hmong, Khamti, Akha, among others) were neither part of monastic nor French education. See also two articles by Volker Grabowsky: "Forced resettlement campaigns in northern Thailand during the early Bangkok period," *Orient Extremus* 37.1 (1994): pp.45-107 [reprinted Journal of the Siam Society 87.1 (1999): pp.45-86] and "Origins of Lao and Khmer national identity: the legacy of the early nineteenth century," *in Nationalism and cultural revival in Southeast Asia: perspectives from the centre and the region*, ed. Sri Kuhnt-Saptodewo, Volker Grabowsky, and M. Großheim (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997).

18 See especially Catherine Clémentin-Ojha et Pierre-Yves Manguin, *Un siècle pour l'Asie: L'École français d'Extrême-Orient, 1898-2000* (Paris: Les editions du pacifique et l'École français d'Extrême-Orient, 2001). See also Louis Malleret, *Le cinquantenaire de l'École français d'Extrême-Orient: Compte rendu des fêtes et cérémonies* (Hanoi: L'École français d'Extrême-Orient, 1953). The EFEO started in Hanoi where it replaced the Mission archéologique d'Indochine. For a brief history of the EFEO in Indochine see Michel Lorrillard, "100 ans de recherche de l"EFEO au Laos" a talk given at the French embassy in Vientiane on 15 June 2001.

19 Louis Finot, "Recherches sur la littèrature laotienne," *Bulletin de l'École français d'Extrême-Orient* 17.5 (1917). In 1918 he also surveyed the royal library in Luang Prabang.

20 There was very little critical scholarship on Lao Buddhism between 1955 and 1975. The *Bulletin des Amis du Royaume Lao* issue on Buddhism (1973) and Marcel Zago's *Rites et cérémonies en milieu bouddhiste lao* (1972) offer little in the way of textual analysis, interviews, or in depth analysis.

21 I thank Bualy Papaphanh, Bounteum Sibounheuang, and Thong Xeuy, as well as the directors of the Sangha College for all of their assistance. Achan Seng at Wat Lao Riverside was also helpful in explaining Sangha education before 1975. The students and teachers at Vat Naxay, Vat Nong Lam Jan, Vat Don Khong, Vat Mai, Vat Ban Nam Chan, Vat Paluang, and many other monasteries were extremely generous with their time and stories about their experiences from the 1940s to the present in Lao monastic schools.

22 Geoffrey Gunn, *Rebellion in Laos: Peasant and Politics in a Colonial Backwater* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990), and Gunn, *Political Struggles in Laos, 1930-1954: Vietnamese Communist Power and the Lao Struggle for National Independence* (Bangkok: Duang Kamol, 1988): pp.76-99; and Gunn, *Theravadins, Colonialists, and Commissars in Laos* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1998): p.118. See also Joel Halpern, *Government, Politics and Social Structure in Laos: A Study of Tradition and Innovation* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1964): pp.58-60.

23 See *Phra Buddha Sāsanā kap Kan Bok Kong Pathet (Buddhism and Governing the Nation)* composed in 1916 by Prince Wachirayan of Thailand that was popular and translated into English. The English version was the basis of a Lao translation by Bunthip Chanthamontri.

24 Many monks in Laos claim that Phra Maha Vichit Viranano, the abbot of Wat Phra That Luang, also graduated Prayok IX (highest Pali degree in the modern Thai system). Although he studied at Wat Anongkaram in Bangkok, he has been vague about how is Pali IX ranking was determined.

25 Some of these books, many of which were published posthumously, include: (Phra) Mahapan Anantho, *Prabeni Lao* (Vientiane, Vat Mikhathaya, 2517 [1973]) and his *Thang Ha Sai* (Vientiane, 1999). Phra Mahapan Anantho's legacy was promoted by a number of his students in the early 1970s and in a recent revival in the last ten years. For example, his work is mentioned in a book on the biographies of five great monks (Ongkan Buddhasāsanā Sampan Lao, *Sivit lae phon ngan khong phramahathera ha ong* (Vientiane: Ongkan Buddhasāsanā Sampan Lao, 2001), his teachings inspired monks and lay scholars like Phra Maha Khamphuey, Phiak Chunlamontri, Phra Philawong, and the highly influential monk in contemporary Laos, Phra Sāli Kanthasilo. His life is also briefly summarized in his funeral festshrift edited by Phaya Khamnai Chantabanya, Khamha Sithiratvong, and many others.

26 (Phra) Mahapan Anantho, *Samakhom Buddhavong Lao* (Vientiane: Vat Buddhavong Paluang, 1971).

27 Ibid., pp.16-17.

28 I have been able to acquire seventeen volumes of this magazine. An adequate description deserves a separate publication which I am in the process of completing. Subjects range widely from meditation practice to short ethical sermons to vernacular summaries of Pali texts. There are even short historical accounts of different religious sites in Laos (mostly in Vientiane) and the origins of local rituals (like the *pithi pun phra that luang*). Each issue emphasizes the importance of education.

29 I thank Patrice Ladwig for providing a number of important sources for the life of Phra Mahapan Anantho. In particular see the report of his funeral in Lao *Samay Daily News* (Vol. 288) 1968.

30 Phra Mahapan Anantho, *Sing thi dai phop hen nai langka thavip* (Vientiane: Khana Pha Song Lao pai paxum Lanka, Vat Buddhavongsa Paluang, 1966). Leuam Thamxot, trans. *Dhammabanyai bang suan* (Vientiane, 1969). Phra Maha Sikham Vorachit, *Banha Vinai Phak 1* (Vientiane: Siaonasit, 1973).

31 Several other Lao publications that emerged in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s speak to the changing dynamics and "progressive"

ideas of Lao monastic education in this period. For example, in 1958 Phra Mahavandi Silachanthani published a book (in his own handwriting) promoting vegetarianism in Laos (a largely unpopular lifestyle in Laos past or present), *Phommatham Mangsavirat* (Vientiane, 1958).

32 Alongside secular subjects like mathematics and biology, Lao folktales are a major part of monastic education. See McDaniel, "Creative Engagement," *Journal of the Siam Society 88* (2000): pp.156-177. See also Peltier, *Le Roman Classique Lao* (Paris: *L'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, 1988), Louis Gabaude, *Les Cetiya de sable* (Paris: *L'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, 1979) and Georges Condominas, *Le bouddhisme au village* (Vientiane: *L'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, 1998): pp.44-45.

33 Many school buildings built by the French are still in use, but often they have been abandoned or converted into farm houses, clinics, or even garages. I thank Eisel Mazard for sending me the 2006 government education statistics for Laos. They state that 35% of Lao lay and ordained students (female and male) attend some sort of monastic primary or secondary school for their education. That adds up to approximately 715,109 students in the country, about 80% of them in monastic primary or lower secondary schools. Of course, Lao educational statistics are often questioned as to their accuracy because of the high mobility of the population.

34 Pierre-Bernard Lafont, "Buddhism in *Contemporary Laos*," in Contemporary Laos, edited by Martin Stuart-Fox (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982): pp.149, 152.

35 Stuart-Fox, *Buddhist Kingdom*, pp.102-103.

36 Ibid., pp. 96-103.

37 Lafont, "Buddhism in Contemporary Laos," p.153.

38 Ibid., p.155.

39 See Stuart-Fox, *Buddhist Kingdom*, 96, pp.105-106. He notes: that in 1979 "there were only 1,700 monks in the country, down from 20,000 when the PL [Pathet Lao/Communist Party] took power."

40 See (Maha) Khampheuy Vannasopha, *Religious Affairs* (Vientiane: Ministry of Information and Culture, 2003).

41 See especially Chatthip Nartsupa, "The Ideology of Holy Men," *Ethnological Study* 13 (1983): pp.111-134 and Collins, *Nirvana and other Buddhist Felicities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): pp.405-413.

42 Many Lao monks did express their political disatisfaction by leaving the country.

43 Note: *taeng* can also mean "speak" in connection to sermons.

44 Khana khamakan bunbap kan seuksa [a committee of researchers within the Ministry of Education], *Khong hang lak sut khong vithayalai song* (Vientiane: Ministry of Education, 1996).

45 Peter Koret, "Books of Search," in *Laos: Culture and Society*, ed. Evans, pp.226-257 (Chiang Mai: Silkworm, 1999).

46 Recently I met two Lao men from California who were ordaining at Wat Bowomiwet in Bangkok. I asked them why they did not ordain in Laos. They claimed that only in Bangkok could they get a "good education." See also Bung-on Piyabhan. *Lao in Early Bangkok* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1998), Chawalee Na Thalang, *Prathetracha khong siam* (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2541 [1998]) ; and, Volker Grabowsky,"Forced resettlement campaigns." *Orient Extremus* 37.1 (1994): pp.45-107.

47 *My Life* (Vientiane: Dokbuakaeo, 2005) offers a personal account of the mobility of many Lao students.

48 See *Phra Buddha Sāsanā kup Kan Bok Kong Pathet*, pp.3-16.

49 The catalogues, curricula, and college histories are available *in situ*. They were compiled by the directors of the college under the auspices of the Ministry of Education (Kasuang Seuksathika). One change to monastic education that has come in recent years has been its growing internationalism. The first major international conference on Lao Literary Heritage was held in Vientiane in January 2004. Lao monks occasionally travel to ceremonies in Thailand and the royal family of Thailand has made donations and public overtures to the Lao sangha and establish monasteries in the United States, France and Australia. While this international activity is certainly not commensurate with that of Thai monks, the Lao sangha is growing and becoming more actively involved in their own education and past. English and World Religions are now taught as courses. Central Thai books, VCDs, and audio cassettes produced mostly in Bangkok monasteries are slowly seeping into the curriculum of Lao monasteries.

ESSAY 12

Buddhism in Cambodia

Historical Sketch

Ian Harris

Introduction

Buddhism is not the only religion currently practiced in Cambodia. Several forms of Islam also flourish, particularly amongst members of the Cham minority, ethnic Chinese continue to observe traditional ancestral rites, tribal peoples of the upland areas preserve their animist beliefs, while Christianity appears to be on the up, although admittedly from a very low base. Nevertheless, Buddhism remains the religion professed by the vast majority of the country's population and it is still common for those with a nationalistic bent to maintain that, "to be Khmer is to be a Buddhist". Having said that, the history of Buddhism in Cambodia represents a highly varied tapestry and, whether viewed doctrinally, culturally or institutionally, ranging from the most magnificent levels of state sponsorship to one of the most inhumane examples of governmental hostility to religion the world has yet witnessed, its vast panorama very amply illustrates the Buddha's profound insight into the impermanence of all conditioned things.

Buddhist Origins in Cambodia: Funan and Zhenla

The earliest evidence of the presence of Buddhism in the Cambodian region comes from ancient inscriptions in Khmer and Sanskrit, associated archaeological finds, and old Chinese historical writings. The interpretation of this scattered material is problematic but the Angkor Borei region of south-eastern Cambodia, called Funan by the Chinese, conducted extensive sea trade with other important parts of Asia. Chinese sources indicate that Buddhism thrived in Funan from the beginning of the sixth century, for two Mahayanist monks, Sanghapala and Mandrasena, are known to have visited the court of Liang in Nanjing were they worked translating Indian Buddhist texts. It is impossible to define their sectarian affiliations but the presence of the great Indian scholar-saint Paramartha [c. 499-569] in Funan just before the middle of the century may suggest that the Yogacara school exercised an influence in the region. From the seventh century inscriptions and contemporary artefacts, including images of the Buddha, begin to appear. Some of the latter show an Indian influence while others suggest possible cultural contacts with the kingdom of Dvaravati.

As the seventh century progressed into the so-called Zhenla period, Buddhism appears to have suffered a reverse, possibly as the result of a concerted campaign of persecution. But it did not entirely disappear, as a handful of Buddhist-orientated inscriptions testify. One of these uses terminology reminiscent of that employed in the Theravada, while two others draw upon Pali, the distinctive language of that school. The sources also indicate that the cults of Buddhist divinities, such as Maitreya, Avalokitesvara and Prajnaparamita, were practiced in Zhenla while monastic establishments maintained by large quantities of pagoda slaves appear to have flourished under royal protection.[1]

Buddhism in the Angkorian Period

The Angkor period was inaugurated in the early ninth century by Jayavarman II, a great patron of the tantric worship of Shiva. Yet by 886 CE, there is evidence that a Buddhist deity, Trailokanatha, was being accorded high level veneration. Buddhist monks were also living peacefully alongside Brahmanical ascetics at the centre of the kingdom, as a stele from Tep Pranam, Angkor Thom makes clear. The elite religious practices of the period seem to have had a strongly syncretic character, a fact demonstrated by Rajendravarman's (944-968) court Brahmin Kavindrarimathana, who founded the three-towered temple of Bat Chum to house images of the Buddha, Lokesvara and Prajnaparamita. Sophisticated understandings of Mahayana Buddhist philosophical concepts are also in evidence in the inscription at Pre Rup, one of Rajendravarman's own great temples, while at Wat Sithor, probably from the reign of Jayavarman V (968-1001), two important texts of the Yogacara, the *Madhyantavibhanga* and the *Tattvasamgraha*, are specifically mentioned.

The archaeological record indicates a great increase in the production of Buddhist statuary from the second half of the tenth century showing that a variety of Buddhist deities, including Maitreya, Prajnaparamita, Vajrapani and Lokesvara, as well as the Buddha, were venerated. Other roughly contemporary inscriptions hint at a tantric context to the Buddhist ritual of the period, a fact reinforced by the survival of tantric imagery at the Khmer temple of Phimai in modern day Thailand, the construction of which was begun around 1000 AD. But the greatest example of the Angkorian patronage of Buddhism is associated with the reign of the Jayavarman VII (1181-c.1220).

Jayavarman VII's father was a Buddhist who may have built the determinedly non-tantric - some scholars have suggested that it may even have been Theravada - temple of Prah Palilay. Two of Jayavarman's wives were also fervent followers of the Buddha. Both appear to have been influential supporters of the flourishing nun's order of the time. One of them, Indradevi, was so learned that she is said to have "surpassed in her knowledge the knowledge of the philosophers," while Jayavarman's son, Tamalinda, may have had contacts with the Theravada sangha in Burma and Sri Lanka.

Jayavarman VII built many important and impressive Buddhist structures. Ta Prohm was founded in 1186 to house an image of his mother in the form of Prajnaparamita, while at Preah Khan of Angkor his father was enshrined in the form of Lokesvara. It is quite possible that the royal household were regarded as a trinity of Buddhist divinities in which Jayavarman himself took the place of the Buddha. Many of Jayavarman's temples were specifically designed to replicate significant elements of Buddhist cosmology. His greatest achievement, the Bayon, located at the centre of his great city (*angkor thom*), dates from the end of his reign. There is no consensus on the identity of its many face-towers that have variously been identified as Lokesvara, the Buddha, Brahma or the king himself. But the geographical arrangement of temples in the regions beyond Angkor suggest that Jayavarman's building activities were conceived on the grandest cosmic scale and designed to purge the realm of the contamination of foreign powers, particularly the Cham, who had been decisively defeated by Jayavarman at an early stage in his reign.

Shortly after Jayavarman VII's reign many Buddhist structures were defaced in a resurgence of muscular Shivaism in which hastily recarved *lingas* and ascetics at prayer replaced Buddhist imagery. Prah Palilay may have been one of the few temples to escape the anti-Buddhist backlash. Although Buddhism did not die out, it was certainly transformed in the closing years of the Angkorian period. When the Chinese diplomat Zhou Daguan visited Angkor in 1296, for example, he reported seeing figures who may have been Theravada Buddhist monks.[2] The last Sanskrit inscription at Angkor dates from 1327 and the Cambodian Mahayana Buddhism appears to have largely disappeared by the time the great city fell to Thai armies around 1431. The first Pali inscription in Cambodia, on the other hand, dates from 1309.

Medieval Cambodia from the Fall of Angkor to the Dawn of the Colonial Period

Non-Mahayanist forms of Buddhism had certainly been present in the region well before the fall of Angkor. However, the precise nature of this presence remains ill-defined. It is difficult to assess the movement's oscillating fortunes over the lengthy and imperfectly understood epoch stretching from Funan to the opening of the fourteenth century, but as David Chandler has sagely noted, "Cambodia was becoming post-Angkorian well before the abandonment of Angkor", and Theravada Buddhism undoubtedly played an influential and sustained role in this transformation.

Hard evidence for the post-Angkorian epoch is, if anything, thinner on the ground than that for the preceding periods. The art historical study of the age is still in its infancy and although some epigraphy does exist it has received significantly less scholarly attention than the early inscriptional record. The Cambodian Royal Chronicles (*rajabangsavatar*) can also be used with care as an important source of illumination. However, they contain copious amounts of legendary material, are somewhat contradictory, are not especially old, and tend to retroject customs and practices current at the time of their composition.

We know that, following an unsettled period of Thai incursions in which monks, Buddha-images and other magically efficacious statues were taken back to Ayutthaya as booty, King Ang Chan (1516-1566) established a new Khmer capital at Longvek at the southern end of the great lake. According to legend, one day the king noticed an unusual large stone in the branches of a koki tree. He ordered craftsmen to carve it with four standing Buddhas facing from its four sides.[3] The resulting piece was enshrined in the cruciform Wat Tralaeng Kaeng, Longvek in 1530. There is good reason to suspect that the stone had been part of an abandoned Angkorian temple. If so, Ang Chan appears to have rededicated an earlier cult object to Theravada usage. Several years later, probably in 1533, he undertook more substantial construction works on and around the nearby hills of Udong.

The most famous Angkor period temple, Angkor Wat, was constructed in the early twelfth century by Suryavarman II and dedicated to Vishnu. However, it was rededicated for Buddhist usage around the same time. A Khmer inscription from the temple, dated 1577, informs us that a pious queen mother has participated in much merit-making activity and meditated on impermanence.

Her son is also mentioned as having restored the structure. In another inscription written two years later a royal figure, probably Sattha (1576-1594), is said to have rebuilt the temple's central tower and covered it with gold. Indeed, the central sanctuary, the Bakan, was significantly re-modeled and invested with great images of Buddha in high relief around this time. Other Buddhist structures, including a number of monasteries, also began to multiply within the precincts of the temple and, further afield, other important centres emerged through the conversion of pre-existing structures. The Theravada complex at Wat Sithor, Srei Santhor, for example, occupied an earlier Angkor period temple, while a nearby structure, Wat Nokor in Kompong Cham province, had originally been built as a Mahayanist temple during the reign of Jayavarman VII.

This resurgence in Buddhist activity is confirmed by the contemporary accounts of European adventurers, one of whom claimed that a third of the male population were Buddhist monks. Angkor Wat was also becoming a pilgrim magnet, a fact supported by fourteen inscriptions in Chinese ink left by Japanese visitors in its central cruciform gallery during the first half of the seventeenth century. In one of these, a certain Morimoto Ukondayu Kazufusa writes that he arrived in January 1632 after a lengthy sea journey to make offerings to four Buddha images, to perform rituals for the repose of the soul of his father, and to pray for the long and peaceful life of his mother. It appears that such pilgrims believed Angkor Wat to be the true site of the Jetavana Vihara which had actually been located in northeastern India (Péri 1923).

Buddhist kingship established a settled pattern throughout much of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Sri Suriyobarm (1602-1619), for example, relinquished the throne at the age of seventy-one "in conformity with ancient tradition" and entered the monastic order. His son, Jayajettha II (1619-1627), then inherited the kingdom, subsequently transferring the capital from Longvek to Udong in 1620. Nevertheless, the Theravada cause did suffer a slight reverse in 1642 when king Ramadhipati I (1642-1658), more widely known as Rama the Apostate, embraced Islam. As a young man he had practiced meditation at Wat Preah Put Leay Leak, Babaur and it seems that even after his conversion he continued to support Buddhism, making donations of a hundred pagoda slaves, a hundred rice fields, and musical instruments to Wat Prasat Pi. Prominent Muslims certainly entered the court during his reign, and there was a surge in mosque building. But there is little evidence of heavy-handed Muslim proselytism. Rama was eventually overthrown with Vietnamese assistance and Buddhism regained its previous status without difficulty.[4]

From the early seventeenth century Cambodia was subject to the oscillating influences of its two stronger neighbours, Vietnam and Thailand. The withdrawal of Vietnam from Cambodia in 1846 (the Vietnamese did not return again until 1979) was marked by King Ang Duang's (1848-1860) return to Udong from enforced exile in Bangkok. Duang threw himself into the refurbishment of the royal funerary monuments and surrounding monasteries of the capital. He also recast Buddha-images and encouraged his people to respect Buddhist monks once again. Indeed, his reign represents something of a renaissance in Cambodian Theravada-inspired art and literature.

Duang wrote poetry, designed costumes for the Royal Ballet, and encouraged the practice of Buddhist virtues. He toured the country discouraging alcohol and opium, condemned hunting and the ill-treatment of animals, laid down guidelines on the proper size for fishing nets, personally prepared food for monks, taught liturgical chanting, and urged the sangha to provide accommodation for the homeless. He is said to have meditated in the middle of the night and spent a significant portion of his fortune providing support to learned monks and literati. When he fell mortally ill in 1860 Ang Duang ordered slaves to be released as a merit-making act. He also expressed the wish that flesh be cut from his body at the moment of death and fed to animals. This was done, the meat being served up on golden plates to birds of prey. With his death the medieval period came to an end.

Buddhism and Modernity in the Colonial Period

In 1854, Ang Duang had petitioned the Thai King Rama IV (Mongkut) to send a complete version of the Tripitaka in the pure form of Pali recently championed by the monastic reformers of that country. Led by Maha Pan (1824-1894) a Khmer monk belonging to Mongkut's spiritual lineage, a delegation of eight monks representing the newly formed and reformist Thommayut (Dhammayutika nikaya) subsequently arrived at Udong carrying bundles of some eighty sacred writings. The Thommayut was established in Cambodia in the following year when Duang participated in a monastic ordination ceremony on a raft at Kompong Luong, near Udong. Maha Pan became the order's first chief monk (*sanghareach*).

Previously-existing elements in the sangha continued to flourish and since they have always remained by far the larger of the two orders they are referred to as the Mahanikay, or great fraternity. There is little to distinguish the two orders in terms of doctrine yet they disagree over the interpretation of some elements of monastic discipline (*vinaya*), such as the wearing of sandals, the carrying of the begging bowl (*bat*) and the consumption of drinks after midday. The most obvious differences to the casual observer relate to the wearing and composition of the monastic robe. The traditional Mahanikay upper robe (*civara*) is made up of fifteen individual pieces, while the Thommayut equivalent has only ten. There are also differences in the way the two orders pronounce Pali.

As time went on it was inevitable that aspects of Thommayut practice would rub off on more reformist-inclined members of the Mahanikay. This process was probably accelerated in the monastic schools that began to emerge in the early twentieth century, since these were places in which members of both monastic orders rubbed shoulders. In addition, a curriculum largely confined to a diet of Pali canonical literature automatically inclined in a Thommayut direction. A royal chronicle relates how some young members of the Mahanikay began to adopt the manners and customs of the Thommayut, including their particular pronunciation of Pali and style of wearing monastic robes. The latter practice became popular among Mahanikay monks keen on appearing more progressive, although it is also worth noting that the ubiquitous tattoo, something that had a clear potential for embarrassment among upwardly mobile sections of the monastic population, is more easily covered up if a monk wears his robe according to the practice of the Thommayut.

Three years after King Norodom (1860-1904) ushered in the colonial period by signing a treaty of protection with French officials at Udong in August 1863, he moved to the new capital city of Phnom Penh. Wat Botum, adjacent to the new royal palace, was rededicated as the headquarters of the new order and the Thommayut enjoyed symbolic prestige, in part because of its close ties with the monarchy but also because of its association with this new concentration of power in Phnom Penh. Nevertheless, it did not enjoy unquestioned preeminence, not least because the French were suspicious of the Thommayut's continued links with Thailand.

The link between organized religion and national liberation is well attested in Cambodia's recent history. As early as 1820 a monk named Kai, claiming magical powers and with a vision of a future free of Vietnamese influence, is said to have rebelled against the feeble monarchy of the time and established himself as king at the sacred mountain of Ba Phnom in southeast Cambodia. A more serious revolt against Norodom and his French "protectors" was incited in 1865-6 by Po Kambo, a former monk who claimed a following of some 10,000 persons including many sangha members. The rebels rallied significant support in the eastern provinces, particularly around Tay Ninh, before they were crushed. We also find evidence of monastic involvement in uprisings in 1906, 1909 and in 1916 when a group of Cambodian monks trained in martial arts, and believing that the ingestion of certain herbal medicines would render them invulnerable, cut short their studies in Bangkok to support the claims of king Sisowath's exiled son, Prince Yukanthor.

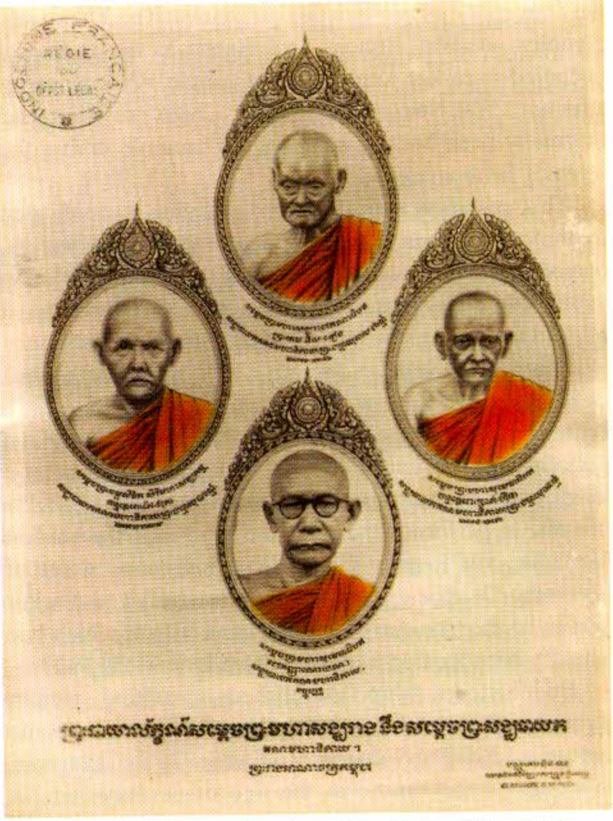


Tableau of Mahanikay patriarchs including Tieng [top] and Chuon Nath [bottom]

In 1909, the Mahanikay patriarch (*banghareach*) Tieng founded two Pali High Schools, one at Angkor Wat, the other in Phnom Penh. The advantages for the French were obvious since the development of Buddhist higher studies in the country reduced the need for monks to travel to Thailand to continue their education. In another important initiative a Buddhist Institute was established in 1930. It did much to revive scholarship within the Buddhist tradition while, at the same time, it sought to lessen the influence of Thailand in Cambodian affairs. The Institute promoted research into Khmer culture and produced a journal, *Kambuja Suriya,* to publish articles on folklore, Buddhist literature, and the royal family. In due course the Buddhist Institute became a breeding ground for key figures in an emerging Khmer nationalist movement.[5]

In 1938, a Khmer-language newspaper, *Nagara Vatta*, was founded by a group based at the Buddhist Institute, including Pach Chhoen and Son Ngoc Thanh. Aimed at monks and low-ranking civil servants educated through the monastic school system rather than the French-educated elite, and with a weekly circulation figure of about 5,000, *Nagara Vatta* championed a moderate anti-colonialism. The newspaper was in the vanguard of opposition to French modernization measures, including attempts to Romanize the Khmer writing system and replace the traditional Buddhist lunar method of dating with the Gregorian calendar. The former policy had led to considerable opposition, particularly from senior monks like the Ven. Hem Chieu, a teacher at the Pali High School, who saw the reform as a dual attack on traditional learning and on the status of monastic educators. Hem Chieu's stand led to his arrest on July 17, 1942, on charges of plotting a *coup d'état*. Subsequently imprisoned, Son Ngoc Thanh organized a demonstration to bring about his release. Around a thousand persons participated, of whom half were umbrella-carrying Phnom Penh-based monks. Hem Chieu died in captivity in 1943 at the age of forty-six in the process becoming an important martyr of the independence struggle (Locard 2006-7)

The fear of Thai influence implicit in the creation of the Buddhist Institute in part explains the gradual erosion of Thommayut influence as the century progressed. By contrast the Mahanikay, with its headquarters at Wat Unnalom, grew in strength and influence most particularly as a result of the work of the scholar-monks the Ven. Chuon Nath (1883-1969) and the Ven. Huot Tat (1891-1975). Both monks had been initiated in modern critical scholarship in Hanoi between 1922 and 1923, where they received detailed training from the great French scholar-official Louis Finot, Director of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient. This schooling instilled in them an enduring negativity towards various unorthodox though traditional Cambodian monastic practices, such as the recitation of mantras, water sprinkling, and magical healing.

Ven. Hem Chieu

Chuon Nath is arguably the most important Cambodian Buddhist monk of the twentieth century. In his important memoir, *My Intimate Friend*, Huot Tat recalls that his friendship with Chuon Nath was cemented when they both began learning French as young monks at Wat Unnalom around 1915. In due course Chuon Nath composed a number of works on monastic discipline (*vinaya*), most notably *Samanera Vinay*, a work that criticized certain elements of contemporary Cambodian monastic practice based on a close reading of Pali sources. It seems that official permission to have the book printed was refused. Despite this opposition, it began to circulate quite widely in samizdat form and its author was forced to endure a number of hostile interviews with the Ministry of Cults and Religious Affairs. The modernism of Chuon Nath and his colleagues was not popular in more traditionalist circles. But his star was in the ascendant and in 1944 he was appointed chief monk of Wat Unnalom. Four years later he became the Mahanikay *sanghareach*.

Among his many achievements, Chuon Nath supervised the production of the officially approved *Cambodian Dictionary*, appearing in two volumes in 1938 and 1943 respectively. This major work of scholarship remains a major cultural and linguistic milestone, although it has not been without its critics. Towards the end of his life Chuon Nath was honoured both at home and in other regions of Buddhist Asia. Huot Tat, on the other hand, brought to completion a project, first conceived by king Monivong in 1929, to edit and translate most Pali canonical writings into Khmer. The conclusion of this enormous undertaking was marked by elaborate celebrations in the capital on April 1, 1969. Interestingly, the Thommayut held aloof from the entire project. As far as they were concerned they already possessed an authentic version of the Tripitaka in Thai. Nevertheless, the Tripitaka project can be seen as part of the wider phenomenon that had been sweeping across Theravada Buddhist Asia for about a century.

Independence

Following a brief period of Japanese rule during World War Two, French control was re-imposed on Cambodia in October 1945. The colonial power had thought it wise to grant permission for the founding of political parties in early 1946, but by this time other forces were on the move. After leading the country to independence in November 1953 King Sihanouk abdicated in March

1955 to launch his Sangkum Reastr Niyum (Popular Socialist Community). Sihanouk's political philosophy was described as Buddhist socialism. It stressed mutual help and the promotion of the well-being of the poor, but for him the people's well-being depended on the good governance of a specifically Buddhist ruler who would guide change while avoiding the pitfalls of state ownership and collectivization. It this way he tried to repudiate the Marxist axiom that rulers represent vested interests that must inevitably be overcome by the will of the people.

Sihanouk also fully endorsed the concept of private property. In his view the redistribution of wealth comes about when the rich, pricked into action by Buddhist teachings, recognize their obligations to the poor. Economic reform, then, was premised on the traditional notion of merit-making by which the rich support the needy. In the Sangkum's heyday large-scale civil engineering projects flourished, expenditure on education rose rapidly, and Sihanouk found many influential monastic supporters including theVen. Chuon Nath who was, nevertheless, resistant to the ex-king's attempts to co-opt monks in support of some the more political aspects of the Buddhist socialist project.

Khmer Republic and Civil War

Sihanouk was deposed by a coup on March 18, 1970, led by Lon Nol who soon sent a message to the patriarchs of the two monastic orders assuring them that, "the present radical change of political rule is not meant to be prejudicial to Buddhism, which remains the state religion as it has up till now". Like the French and Sihanouk before them, the new regime used pliant monks to counteract growing communist propaganda in the countryside to some effect. One of these was the 1942 monk's demonstration veteran, the Ven. Khieu Chum, who used radio broadcasts to argue that Cambodians should reject the monarchy on the grounds that it had been repudiated by the Buddha after he left his palace and embraced the life of a religious renunciant (Harris 2008).

Yet the monastic order's support for the new regime was not a foregone conclusion. The deep-rooted connection between sangha and state, traditionally embodied in the person of the king, ensured that many monks became very suspicious about the new turn of events. For obvious reasons, members of the aristocratic and monarchist Thommayut were deeply affected by the fall of Sihanouk. A protest march in Phnom Penh planned by senior members of the order immediately after his ouster seems only to have been prevented by the swift intervention of the Ven. Huot Tat.

Lon Nol interpreted his battle with the Viet-Cong and Khmer Rouge in apocalyptic terms. His 1970 pamphlet, *The Religious War*, had declared, "The current war in Cambodia is a religious war". His desire to strengthen Buddhism both within the country and throughout Asia was given added resonance by the prophetic slogan, "If communism comes, Buddhism will be completely eliminated". Indeed, Lon Nol saw himself in the role of a Buddhist messiah who would vanquish an enemy composed of atheists and devils (*thmil*). The latter attribution effectively deprived the communists of normal personhood and meant that Buddhist ethical requirements need not apply. They could be killed without compunction.

Lon Nol suffered a stroke in early 1971 and never ruled effectively again. A superstitious populace, discovering that he had lost the use of the right arm used to sign the order to depose Sihanouk, took this as a bad omen. Much of his time was now spent listening to the military advice of Buddhist holy-men, like Om Mam Prum Mani - a monk claiming to be an incarnation of Jayavarman VII, who promised supernatural solutions to the civil war. Throughout the period various Buddhist prophecies also circulated. One talked of a "bodhi tree with flat stump, the roots do not grow, a poisonous cobra hides quietly at the same place..."

Democratic Kampuchea

Soon after the fall of Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge announced that there would be freedom for all religious groups in the new state. This freedom was subsequently enshrined in Article 20 of the Constitution of Democratic Kampuchea.

Yet, the pressure on institutional Buddhism was significantly raised after the communist victory. The Ven. Huot Tat, now the Mahanikay *sanghareach*, appears to have been executed at Wat Prang, Udong had to undertake April 18. Purges of other senior monks occurred almost immediately. Ten of the original twelve members of the influential Tripitaka Commission were identified and executed in the first three days and the elimination of leading monks continued as the year progressed.[6]

The situation with regard to ordinary monks was a little more complex. Many were evacuated from their home *wats* and forced to walk to a series of distant monasteries where they were placed on meagre rations and had to undertake hard labour. Their numbers were greatly increased by those obliged to leave the massively swollen monastic institutions of the capital and other important cities. For several years the communists had distinguished between rural and city monks but the distinction now crystallized. While rural monks were characterized as "proper and revolutionary", those from the city were deemed "imperialists". These latter "April 17 monks" or "new monks" were rapidly laicized and virtually none remained in robes by the beginning of the 1975 rainy season. A few did manage to escape to neighbouring countries but most were set to work and, if they resisted, were liquidated just like everyone else. Disrobing was very rarely a voluntary act even though some monks were almost ironically forced to sign a document certifying the fact that they had "awoken" to their parasitical status.

Rural "base monks" were treated a little differently. In some zones, they were allowed to observe the traditional three-month rainy season retreat (*vassa*) ending in October. It is customary to conclude *vassa* with a ceremony, called *kathen*, in which lay people offer new robes to chosen monks as a means of making merit. Rather intriguingly, there were isolated examples of an "inverted" *kathen* at the end of the 1975 retreat, for selected base monks were presented with revolutionary garb, i.e. black trousers, black shirt and a traditional Khmer scarf (*krama*), by officials after which they were "invited" to leave the monastic order. Doubtless, very few refused.

In the period between October and December 1975, almost all monasteries still active in the country were closed. A Party document dated September 1975 stated that: "Ninety to 95% of the monks have disappeared, in the sense that the majority of monks have abandoned religion. Monasteries, which were the pillars for monks, are largely abandoned. The foundation pillars of Buddhism are abandoned . . . in future they will dissolve further." The post-victory persecution of Buddhism can be read as part of a wider programme designed to control all aspects of daily existence in line with the revolutionaries' goals "to push the people to be happy". It appears to have unfolded in four stages. In the first phase members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and monks closely associated with Lon Nol regime were rounded up and executed. The defrocking of "new monks" was largely accomplished by July 1975. This was followed several months later by the laicization of base monks, and finally by the full elimination of institutional Buddhism. All of this smacks of a well-coordinated policy, yet initial appearances can be deceptive and it is difficult, at this stage, to be certain as to whether a policy for the systematic liquidation of monastics was pursued in Democratic Kampuchea. Estimates made in 1980 suggest that about 63 per cent of monks died or were executed by the Khmer Rouge, but these bald calculations shed little light on the factors underlying their demise. In most cases, for instance, we do not know if their end was a direct consequence of their previous monastic status. Nevertheless, all observers agree that, by the end of the period the number of monks in the country was negligible.

Once monasteries had been emptied they were put to other purposes. Some were dismantled to provide building materials for civil engineering projects. Others became local economic bureau, or torture and execution facilities. They were also used to house pigs. The oft-repeated claim that Buddhist palm-leaf manuscripts were used for rolling tobacco is rather obvious propaganda, for the resulting cigarette would have been virtually impossible to smoke, but funerary monuments and Buddha images were smashed and recycled. A slogan of the time advised, "If you demolish a statue of the Buddha you will gain a sack of cement (*komtech preah muey ang chomnenh si:mang muey bau*)" Yet the extent of iconoclasm in Democratic Kampuchea still remains to be established, particularly in the light of conflicting reports. Vandalism of monastic premises did occur on a large scale during Democratic Kampuchea, yet the full extent of the practice is difficult to determine.

The Rebirth of Cambodian Buddhism

In May 1978, Heng Samrin gave a speech in which he revealed the existence of a dissident grouping within the Khmer Rouge. He called on "all patriotic forces regardless of political and religious tendencies", including "Buddhist monks and nuns", to join a united front to help "topple the reactionary and nepotistic Pol Pot-Ieng Sary gang". A Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation was formed on December 2, 1978, and with the aid of Vietnamese troops most of the country was quickly liberated. A new People's Republic of Kampuchea [PRK] government gradually reversed some of the most extreme anti-religious policies of the previous regime, a partial restoration of Buddhism being one of its first acts on coming to power.

Monastic ordination in the aftermath of Democratic Kampuchea proved difficult for a number of reasons. On a practical level it was impossible to assemble the necessary quorum of fully ordained monks to perform the valid rite. But there is good reason to believe that some monks were unofficially re-established quite quickly, for thirty-nine had signed a report, dated June 13, 1975, used in evidence at the PRK's August 1979 trial *in absentia* of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary. The other major constraint was the authority's desire to keep a tight rein on all extra-governmental activity. On September 19, 1979 seven "carefully chosen" former monks, all with between twenty and sixty years former service, were re-ordained with government approval at Wat Unnalom by Theravada monks from Vietnam headed by Thich Bou Chon, advisor to the Central Commission of the Vietnamese Theravada Buddhism. The delegation comprised a mixture of Khmer who had fled to Vietnam during the Democratic Kampuchea period augmented by ethnic Khmer from southern Vietnam (Kampuchea Krom).[7]

In the PRK, monks were to have the same rights and duties as all other persons. They had to possess valid identity cards and respect government regulations. As "state employees" they were expected, in contravention of the norms of Buddhist monastic discipline (*vinaya*), to cultivate vegetables in the grounds of the monasteries for their own consumption. They were not permitted to engage in mendicancy. However, as things began to relax monks were allowed out of their monasteries for one hour every morning for alms collection and older members of the laity were permitted to visit the local pagoda in the evenings after the day's work had been completed.

The re-establishment of pagodas was closely supervised and new monasteries could not be started willy-nilly. However, by 1981 some were being re-built and a number of *kathen* ceremonies took place against a background of slowly growing affluence. Although the state did not allocate funds for such undertakings (they were largely financed by local communities), sympathetic officials sometimes helped *wat* building committees to acquire inexpensive materials. Many monasteries, particularly in the Phnom Penh area, were used as military barracks, offices, housing, etc., although this need not necessarily be regarded as a restriction on the freedom of religion for, given the economic devastation of the time, local resources to support more than one monastery in a specific locale must have been severely restricted.

In September 1981, Ven. Tep Vong, one of the seven ordained in the official September 1979 ceremony, was "elected" to head up a unified sangha, although he did not adopt the traditional title of *samdech sanghareach,* arguing that this would have been inappropriate in a socialist setting. Instead he was referred to as president (*prathean*). The unification of the Cambodian *sangha* was unprecedented. The dissolution of the boundaries between the pre-1970s royalist and pro-Thai Thommayut and the larger Mahanikay monastic fraternities in fact appears to have been modeled on earlier developments in Vietnam where Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism had been unified in early 1960s. However, despite the fact that the government was committed to very strong levels of regulation, the weakness of its bureaucratic systems meant that there was ample opportunity to subvert official policy. The regulation of ordination and the resulting cap on monastic numbers, for example, could be partially circumvented by the establishment of unofficial "house *wats*" in private homes and apartments

The creation of the PRK had significantly eased the freedom of movement in Cambodia and the numbers of Khmer attempting to cross into Thailand grew dramatically. The flow became so great that a number of refugee camps were eventually established along the Thai side of the border. In most of these monks who had been defrocked in early Democratic Kampuchea could resume their previous functions and, as the camps became more established, young men and women, many of whom had lost family members, were attracted to the religious life. As a result a number of monasteries were constructed. Khao I Dang camp, for example, had a large Mahanikay pagoda, Wat Pothirot, with between forty and eighty monks and novices. Individual monks appear to have been strongly influenced by the political affiliations of their particular camp so Site B contained pro-Sihanouk monks while monks based at Site 8 were, perhaps surprisingly, pro-Khmer Rouge.

Towards the middle of the 1980s, a government-sponsored mass ordination of around one thousand five hundred monks took place in Phnom Penh and various restrictions on monk ordination were lifted in mid-1988. In July, Radio Phnom Penh began each day with a broadcast of a Buddhist service from a city monastery, alternating between Mahanikay and Thommayut. The establishment of a new State of Cambodia [SOC] in April 1989 was precipitated by a gradual Vietnamese military withdrawal following the break-up of the Soviet Union. The SOC Constitution restored Buddhism's place as the state religion. Indeed, Prime Minister Hun Sen [b.1951] apologized for earlier government "mistakes" towards religion and asked to be pardoned in a series of talks around the country. He and other leaders attended a Buddhist ceremony at the Buddha-bone relic shrine next to the Phnom Penh railway station and engaged in other acts of conspicuous Buddhist piety, such as the construction of an ossuary shrine replete with explicit Buddhist cosmological motifs to those killed by the Khmer Rouge at the killing field of Choeung Ek, on the outskirts of Phnom Penh. A tax on temple-monasteries was also abolished around this time and the structure of Buddhist primary and secondary education, including Pali schools, re-emerged in the early 1990s. It is estimated that the number of monks in the period 1985-89 was about 7,250, but by 1990 the figure had risen to around 16,400, of whom 6,500 were novices. Much of this growth, including the greatly enhanced programme of monastery reconstruction, was largely financed by members the extensive Khmer diaspora, but the administration's new-found enthusiasm for all things Buddhist certainly enhanced Hun Sen's popularity.

The Vietnamese finally withdrew from Cambodia in September 1989 and in mid-October 1991, a few days before signing the Paris Peace Accord, the ruling Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP) changed its name to the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). In the process it renounced "authentic Marxist-Leninism" and its history of revolutionary struggle. It embraced the "free-market". The CPP's new political platform stated, "The death penalty is abolished. Buddhism is the state religion with the Tripitaka as basis of laws. All religious activities are allowed in the country. The traditions, customs and cultural heritage of the nation must be preserved and glorified, as well as the traditions of all the nationalities living in the Cambodian national community."

The scene was now set for the restoration of the monarchy as an indispensable pillar of both state and religion, something that would have been inconceivable at the beginning of the PRK period. In November 1991 Prince Sihanouk returned to the country from long-term residence in China and resumed the traditional function of supreme patron of the sangha. The following month he invested *sanghareach* for both of the two pre-1975 monastic fraternities, the Ven. Tep Vong taking control of the Mahanikay, while Ven. Bour Kry, a prominent figure from the Cambodian community in Paris, headed up the Thommayut. Official restoration of both ecclesiastical hierarchies followed in February 1992. For the first time since the mid-1970s, both orders enjoyed theoretical equivalence. But the peace settlement had also stimulated the return of many refugees from Thailand and other neighbouring countries. Included in their number were monks, some of whom had remained in robes throughout the 1970s and 80s. Their return to Cambodia would, in due course, raise a number of uncomfortable questions about the seniority of the newly appointed ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Ven. Tep Vong

According to the September 1993 Constitution the motto of the new Kingdom of Cambodia became "Nation, Religion, King". Article 43 more specifically ensured that, "Buddhism shall be the State religion" although "Khmer citizens of either sex shall have the right to freedom of belief". The Ministry of Cults and Religious Affairs had been re-established in 1992. Its main aims were to re-establish pre-1975 ecclesiastical structures, to develop and consolidate monk education, and to re-establish the Buddhist Institute. The Institute itself re-emerged in June 1992 and has been funded by on-going grants from two non-Khmer non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBF) and the Japanese Sotoshu Relief Committee (JSRC). Its quarterly journal *Kambuja Suriya* resumed publication in 1994.

Virtually the entire library of the original Buddhist Institute of around 30,000 titles and 4,000 documents had disappeared since 1975 although whether this occurred as a deliberate and concerted act of vandalism or simply as a result of foraging for paper has not been satisfactorily established. The JSRC has consequently been heavily involved in the reprinting of past Buddhist Institute publications, particularly those relating to Buddhism and Khmer culture. However, the first Buddhist publication in Khmer to appear after the Democratic Kampuchea period was a version of the *Dhammapada* published by the Khmer *sangha* in California in 1990.

Emergence of Recent Sangha Groupings

The Mahanikay had grown in strength and influence during the French colonial period, particularly as a result of the activities of the Ven. Chuon Nath and the Ven. Huot Tat. Their special monastic grouping, the Thommakay, was vehement in its criticism of the "corrupt practices" of the unreformed segment of the monastic order. Indeed, so bitter was the resulting dispute that in 1918 a group of senior Mahanikay monks lobbied King Sisowath who, with French blessings, issued an ordinance specifically referring to the split between "modernists" and "traditionalists". Although unsuccessful in turning the tide of reformism it forbade "teaching reforms or . . . spreading among the faithful modern ideas which conflict with traditional religion".

Ven. Mahaghosananda was an heir to the modernism of Chuon Nath. Born around 1922 in Takeo Province, he became a monk at the age of fourteen. Having studied at the Buddhist University in Phnom Penh, he travelled to north India to work for a doctorate at the newly established Buddhist University of Nalanda. While there he seems to have come under the influence of Nichidatsu Fujii, the founder of the Japanese peace-oriented Buddhist sect Nipponzan Myohoji. In 1978 he made his way to the Cambodian refugee camps on the Thai border helping establish temples for the spiritual, educational and cultural uplift of the people. One of the aims of the organization was to identify, support, and re-ordain surviving Cambodian Buddhist monks. To aid this process, Mahaghosananda helped to found over thirty temples in Canada and the United States in these early years. In 1981 he stated that "we must find the courage to leave the traditional temple and enter the temple of the teeming human experience that is filled with suffering . . . it is important to remember that we carry our temple with us always. We are the temple."

Mahaghosananda first came to general prominence as the symbolic leader of a peace march (*dhammayietra*) in April 1992, in which around 350 monks, nuns and lay Buddhists escorted about a hundred refugees from the border refugee camps back to their villages against a background of some official opposition. By the time the marchers arrived in Phnom Penh their numbers had swelled significantly, to the extent that the event was covered by sections of the international media. In recognition of his enhanced status Sihanouk conferred the title Leader of Religion and Peace (*samdech song santipeap*) on Mahaghosananda later the same year and annual Dhammayietra have become a regular feature of Cambodian life. He died in the US in March 2007.

Mahaghosananda's kind of engaged Buddhism received support from a massive influx of foreign NGOs in the run-up to the 1993 elections. Since 1994 the Buddhism for Development (BDF) organization based at Wat Anlongvil, Battambang Province, has received significant funding from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. It concentrates on the training of Buddhist monks in rural development work, the establishment of rice and money banks, tree-nurseries and compost-making activities. It has also held a series of annual national seminars on Buddhism and the Development of the Khmer Society. Another German NGO, the Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) has worked mainly through local *wat* communities in Kampong Thom Province to encourage community development. It has also helped to re-develop the pilgrimage site at Phnom Santuk. GTZ seeks to regenerate the moral influence of Buddhism in contemporary society, arguing that lay people have always engaged in pagoda-related activities as a form of merit-making. The challenge, then, is to extend the range of traditional merit-making actions to include activities like tree-planting, pond-digging, and bridge- and road-building involving the laity as a form of enlightened Buddhist self-interest.

In a series of ground-breaking books and articles the French scholar Francois Bizot has shown that in Cambodia, a hidden or "interior" spiritual path has existed for many centuries alongside the more explicit "exterior path" described in the writings of the Pali canon, and championed by Mahanikay modernists. Adepts of the esoteric tradition have tended to distinguish themselves from their reformed co-religionists in a variety of ways, but most especially through the deployment of a series of "non-orthodox" Theravada ritual and meditative techniques and an emphasis on the importance of traditional palm-leaf manuscripts.

It seems that practitioners of these ancient (*boran*) techniques began to re-establish themselves around 1989 after the state control of religion had significantly diminished and the country was moving rapidly away from doctrinaire communism. Before 1970 the *boran* tradition had prospered in the provinces of Siem Reap and Kompong Cham and one of the more significant figures involved in re-establishing the old initiatory and ritual traditions today is the Ven. Daung Phang, originally the chief monk of Kroch Chmar district, Kompong Cham Province. He is said to have the power of prophecy and is adept at various magical practices.[8]

Wat Champuskaec, some ten kilometers south of Phnom Penh on the eastern bank of the Bassac River, is another centre for the traditionalists. Its chief monk, the Ven. Om Lim Heng (b.1964), appears to act as a quasi-official chaplain to Hun Sen who lives in nearby Takhmau. His photograph, prominently displayed in a rather magnificent thousand Buddha hall within the monastery compound, shows him wearing a medal, conferred by Hun Sen, hanging from his monastic robes. Another monk with magical powers, Om Lim Heng, specializes in mass water-sprinkling. Indeed, so many people can gather at the monastery during peak times that he is obliged to use a power hose to accomplish this task. Wat Champuskaec, clearly one of the wealthiest religious establishments in the land, has benefited from a resurgence of conspicuous merit-making by the nouveaux riches, such as high ranking politicians and senior members of the military.

An emphasis on the practice of vipassana, a form of meditation involving the development of clear insight into the rising and falling of physical and mental phenomena, is characteristic of most modernist forms of Theravada Buddhism. The development of "bare awareness" is deemed sufficient for the practice so that the cultivation of highly concentrated states of mind is not required. However, when the *boran* movement in Cambodia refers to modernists as "adepts of vipassana" the description, although largely accurate, contains an implicit criticism. Daung Phang has claimed that vipassana practice is "foreign" and different from the highly focused traditional Khmer meditative practices associated with the "interior path" that he teaches. The implication here is that Buddhism modernism has come from outside the country and its practices represent a threat to traditional Khmer spirituality. Whether this has any bearing on the murder of the Ven.Sam Bunthoeun is difficult to say. Sam Bunthoeun had a keen interest in the practice of vipassana and this led him to set up a centre for lay and monastic practice at Wat Unnalom in the late Nineties. When his following outgrew these premises he established the Buddhist Meditation Centre of Udong near the old capital. He was shot in broad daylight by at least two assailants at the entrance to Wat Langka, Phnom Penh on February 6, 2003, and died in hospital two days later.

Official resistance to the Thommayut continued after institutional Buddhism was re-established in the early PRK period and, as has been previously noted, it was only in December 1991 that the two orders were recreated after Sihanouk appointed the Ven. Tep Vong and the Ven. Bour Kry, a senior figure within the Paris-based Cambodian community, patriarchs of the Mahanikay and Thommayut respectively. Today at Wat Botum, the symbolic centre of the order, Thommayut monks are greatly outnumbered and physically isolated in a separate section of the compound from their Mahanikay fellows. The situation reflects the relatively short history of the newly formed order, but official suspicion of pro-monarchical organizations and individuals clearly persists and, although members of the Thommayut are once more permitted to go to Thailand for higher ordination, they are distrusted in some quarters for much the same reasons as they were in the colonial and communist periods.

Thommayut monks do not appear to possess the developmentalist and reformist fervour of their modernist Mahanikay counterparts. This may simply be because the Mahanikay is overwhelmingly the largest segment of the sangha. It is also predominantly rural. But the Thommayut's stricter observance of monastic discipline, such the prohibition on handling money and digging the soil, may be a factor. Another possibility is that the Thommayut hierarchy is more attuned to the adverse impact the receipt of international funds might eventually have on the traditions of Cambodian Buddhism. Given their greater contact with Thailand they are certainly more likely to be more aware of this as a potentially divisive issue.

Concluding Remarks

One must be careful in interpreting the recent emergence of diversity within the sangha since the country returned to some semblance of normalcy following the Paris Peace Accord. To some extent the boundaries between the groupings outlined above are rather fluid and specific individuals may move from one to the other with considerable ease. Nevertheless, a few broad generalizations may be justified. Leading figures amongst the modernizers tend to be individuals who were out of the country during the Democratic Kampuchea and People's Republic of Kampuchea periods. Traditionalists are more likely to have survived the Pol Pot period in a disrobed state in Cambodia itself, or to have escaped to Vietnam from where they rose to positions of influence after the fall of the Khmer Rouge. Of these groupings, the traditionalists tend to adopt the most strongly nationalist line while modernists are far more relaxed about the encroachment of global influences.

On a more specifically political level, members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, particularly those in the Mahanikay, have tended to enjoy close relations with the ruling elite and this small group of older "revolutionary monks" has sought to advance the ruling party's line through the construction of a carefully choreographed form of state Buddhism. The *boran* movement, on the other hand, appears less interested in fighting the battles of the past and is generally further removed from the paraphernalia of the state. Even so, it has benefited significantly through allying itself with wealthy individuals and the mushrooming business sector. The Thommayut, as it has for much of its history, remains marginalized and, despite some aristocratic patronage, must count on a limited base of popular support. It clearly has a problem in reconciling its links to foreign states with the national interest and its growth has suffered accordingly.

No form of Buddhism came so close to total extinction as that in Cambodia during the late 1970s, and given the recent histories of religious persecution in other regions of east and central Asia this is saying quite a lot. Since that nadir, Khmer Buddhism has gradually learnt to adapt and prosper as socialist controls were first gradually relaxed and finally disappeared. In actual fact the process of adaptation to a great variety of political contexts, be they colonial, monarchical, socialist, republican or doctrinaire Marxist, has been a marked feature of its history over the last century and a half. Indeed, on the evidence of this short survey, it may be no exaggeration to assert that an accommodating spirit has been an intrinsic feature of Cambodian Buddhism since its inception some sixteen hundred years ago. The visible presence of the sangha and its unique significance as the only institution able to operate effectively and with high levels of mass support throughout the country has ensured that almost all governments have felt the need to cultivate the Buddhist sector whatever their political philosophy. There is little reason to assume that this situation will change in the near future.

Notes

1 For a more detailed treatment of the Buddhism of the Funan and Zhenla periods, see Harris 2005, 3-11.

2 On Zhou Daguan, see Pelliot 1951.

3 On the interesting issue of the four cardinal direction facing Buddhas, see Thompson 2000.

4 For more detailed information on Rāmādhipatī I, see Mak Phœun 1990.

5 For excellent discussions of this period in the formation of "Buddhist modernism" in Cambodia, see Edwards 2007 and Hansen 2007.

6 For an exhaustive treatment of the fate of Buddhism under the Khmer Rouge and its rebirth after 1979, see Harris 2007 and forthcoming.

7 For information on the recent history of Khmer Buddhism in Kampuchea Krom. See Harris 2009.

8 For an interesting discussion of the re-emergence of certain ascetic rites associated with the neo-*boran* movement, see de Bernon 2000.

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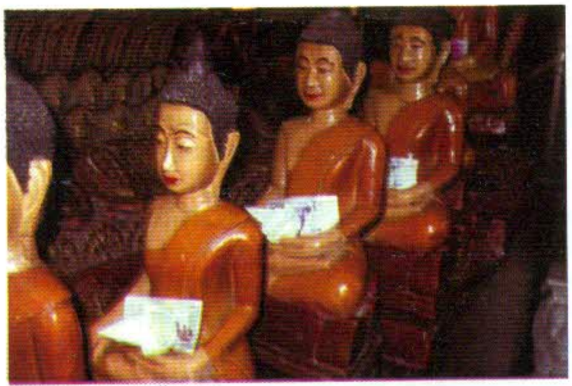
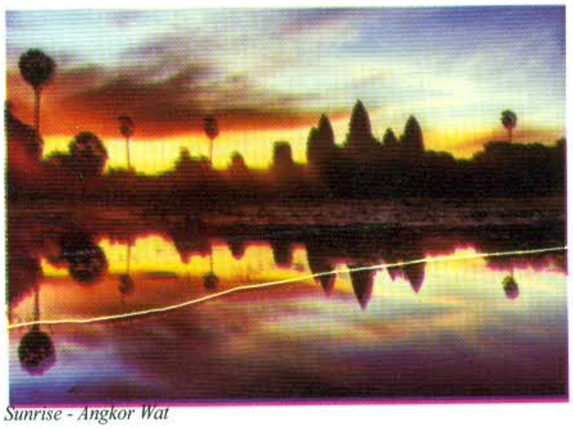
Temple building of Wat Phnom



Buddhas holding offerings



Sunrise - Angkor Wat

ESSAY 13

Buddhism in Vietnam

Past and Present

Ven. Dr. Thích Tâm Đức

Introduction

Buddhism arrived in Vietnam around the 2nd century B.C. in the context the nation was being independent. However, from the year 43 A.D. up to 1975 A.D. Vietnam suffers constant foreign aggressions and civil wars. For this reason, Vietnamese Buddhism must adapt itself to such circumstances by secularizing itself, i.e., taking part into many aspects of the nation, only for the welfare of the nation and people. Although the nation spends periods of rise and fall, many dynasties or regimes collapse, Buddhism in Vietnam continues to survive and develop incessantly. It is independent from the government it lives in. It can serve any dynasty or government as long as their rules are for the welfare and benefit of the people. Many questions relating to the Vietnam history would not be clear if one does not understand Vietnamese Buddhism.

A) Vietnamese Buddhism in The Past:

Preserving The National Culture And Independence

According to the Vietnamese text *Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái* (compiled in the 14 th century A.D.), the first Vietnamese Buddhists – *Chữ Đồng Tử* and his wife *Tiên Dung* (*Hùng Vương's* princess) – studied Buddha's teachings (thaumaturgics) from an Indian monk named *Phật Quang* at mountain *Quỳnh Viên* in *Cửa Sót* (now *Hà Tĩnh*)[1]. And, as mentioned in *Thiền Uyển Tập Anh*,[2] after defeating the South force the Chinese *Tuỳ* dynasty (603 – 607 A.D) intended to propagate Buddhism to Vietnam, but monk *Đàm Thiên* informed that in *Giao Châu* Province (former name of Vietnam at that time) there had already been 500 monks and scores of Buddhist texts translated into Vietnamese language.

After defeating *Trưng Vương* in 43 A.D. the Chinese took up *Giao Châu* and performed a policy of assimilation by capturing the intellectual and leaders, changing *Việt Luật* (Vietnamese law) … But they failed. A letter from *Hoài Nam Vương* sent to *Hán Võ Đế* writes: "The Viets are shaving head, tattooing body. They cannot be administered by Chinese law…, not following Chinese calendar."[3] The *Hán* historians also said: "The people of *Giao Châu* do not know the Way of father and son (both swim at the same river). They only follow sexual indulgence, not knowing the Way of husband and wife (free marriage after knowing each other at seasoning rituals), etc."[4]

But from 100 A.D. onwards successful insurgences of the Viets led to the establishment of an independent government (180 – 230) greatly influenced by Buddhism under *Sĩ Nhiếp* .

1) *Sĩ Nhiếp* (137 – 226): He was of Chinese origin called Vietnamese king – *Sĩ Vương*. He abandoned his original customs and morals, and was converted to a barbarian religion (Buddhism). The famous Vietnamese pagoda, *Pháp Vân*, was built by *Sĩ Nhiếp* himself. Once sitting on a chariot down the street he was accompanied by scores of persons '*Hồ*'[5] burning incense.[6]

Phap Van Pagoda

2) The text *Lý Hoặc Luận* : At the end of the 2nd century A.D. appeared the text *Lý Hoặc Luận* (Treatise on removing doubt) by *Mâu Tử*.[7] The text which was composed of 37 pairs of questions and answers was important not only for the information it gave about Buddhism in Vietnam but also for the distinction it enjoyed as the first treatise on Buddhism to be written by a Chinese convert. By protecting Buddhism and criticizing the ideas and practices of native cults, superstitions or arguments of the opponents, the text may be said to highlight the superiority of Buddhism to Confucianism and Taoism at the time. At the end of the text, the hearers, after listening to the author's explanation about Buddhism, requested to take refuge in Buddha.

One important thing in the text, in the background of Chinese rule, *Mâu Tử* (C.160 – 230), a representative of Buddhism in Vietnam dared to refuse the sense of arrogance of the Chinese, especially the Confucianists, that China is the centre of Heaven-and-Earth and all other countries are barbarians. The text not only converted the upper class but also met the religious belief of the people with a definition about a thaumaturgical Buddha "Buddha is an awakened one, endowed with thaumaturgics without limit, untouched by fire, weapons, impurities or bad luck, and is able to fly in air and illuminate when sitting."

It can be said that the text *Lý Hoặc Luận* was a summary of the struggle on culture between Vietnam and the North, mainly Buddhism and Confucianism, and that Confucianism or Taoism was unnecessary to Vietnamese Buddhism and culture.

3) *Khương Tăng Hội* (? – 280) : The person bringing the cultural strength from Vietnam to China was *Khương Tăng Hội*. *Hội*'s father was a Sogdian, who migrated from his homeland to India, then from India to *Giao Châu* for trade and he married a Vietnamese girl. From this marriage Hoäi was born in *Giao Châu*. When he was aged 15, his parents died; he left home for monkhood life and studied hard under *Mâu Tử's* tutorship. He was well-versed in Sanskrit and Chinese. When staying in *Giao Châu* and hearing that Buddhism had not been accepted by *Giang Đông* government in China yet, *Hội* moved to *Kiến Nghiệp* (Nan-king) in 247 A.D. under the reign of king *Ngô Tôn Quyền*. When *Hội* performed the magic of Buddha's relics, the King admired him very much and had a temple erected for worshipping the relics. The name of the temple was *Kiến Sơ*. After that, Buddhism flourished there. *Hội* died in 280 A.D. and stayed in China for 25 years.[8]

Hội translated, interpreted and compiled some Buddhist texts. He explained in the text *An Ban Thủ Ý*[9] a method of meditation inclusive of 6 stages (*sổ, tùy, chỉ, quán, hoàn, tịnh*). Those who are skilful in this meditation can achieve some magical powers, of which the most important is to see the Buddha.

New Buddhist Ideology

Even till the mid-5th century A.D. when a concept of the thaumaturgical Buddha did not become a decisive one in the religious life of Chinese Buddhism yet, in Vietnam in the early centuries A.D. *Mâu Tử* and *Khương Tăng Hội* had already mentioned it. The concept was enthusiastically received and dreamt of by the Viets in the condition of a nation suppressed by fiendish aggressors. However, after the death of *Hội* in about 280 A.D., and for over successive 150 years, nobody succeeded with *Hội*'s instructions, i.e., nobody saw the appearance of a thaumaturgical Buddha at all. The doubt, till the mid-5th century A.D., became a main question and was brought out by *Lý Miễu*, a representative of a newly Buddhist tendency, in a letter sent to two monks *Đạo Cao* and *Pháp Minh*, representatives of supernatural Buddhism; however, they could not satisfy *Lý Miễu*. Had not the thaumaturgics be found from outside, could it be found inside the body?

After *Hội*'s death, many uprisings occurred and the Viets gradually realized that it was they alone that could save themselves, certainly not outsiders. The newly critical Buddhist ideology was later turned into the great strength of people in order to liberate themseves and construct a powerful, independent country by the patriotic leaders such as *Lý Trường Nhân*, *Lý Thúc Hiến* (458 – 485) and especially *Lý Bí* in the mid-6th century A.D. who proclaimed himself as the South Emperor. The dream of the Viets came true with an independent state, named *Vạn Xuân*,[10] founded by *Lý Bí* (or *Lí Bân*) from 545 – 603. To show his deep gratitude to Buddhism, a faithful comrade, *Lý Bí* had the first Buddhist *Khai Quốc* (state-founding) pagoda built in the capital.

Khai Quoc Pagoda

Not so long after *Lý Bí's* enthronement was the founding of the Vietnamese *Vinitaruci* (*Tỳ Ni Đa Lưu Chi*) *Thiền*[11] school (580) which declared that enlightenment is within and nobody heard about the question of seeing the Buddha longer. The concept of thaumaturgical Buddhism was turned into that of *secular Buddhism* which can be considered a socio-political theory. This explains the political tendency of Buddhism in Vietnam from the *Vinitaruci* to next *Thiền* schools.

Vô Ngôn Thông Thiền' School And Independence

For a clear-cut solution of the 2 things – crisis of thaumaturgical Buddhism in mid-5th century and taking part in the protection and construction of the country – *Vô Ngôn Thông Thiền* school was founded. In 820 *Vô Ngôn Thông*, a Chinese *Thiền* Master, came to Vietnam. He refused the viewpoint that *Thiền* originated from

India or China and advocated that whoever enlightens he is Buddha, any place that is enlightened it is *Thiền*. This *Thiền* school asks for the Buddhists to carry out their will and ideas, i.e., to engage in worldly life and politics.

When the ruling machine of the *Đường* (唐) dynasty in China became weak and confused, the Viets started rising up. *Mai Hắc Đế* (722) and *Bố Cái Đại Vương* (766 – 799) failed. But *Khúc Thừa Dụ* (906-907), *Khúc Hạo* (907-917), *Khúc Thừa Mỹ* (917-923) and *Ngô Quyền* (905-938) continuously rose up, defeating the *Đường* and *Nam Hán* (南 漢) and starting a long and stable period of national independence in every aspect – culture, economy, politics and military affairs – with the successive dynasties *Ngô, Đinh, Tiền Lê*, and especially the *Lý* and *Trần* dynasties.

It is during this period that the intellectual Buddhist monks were skilful counselors who helped the leaders to gain success. Monk *Định Không* (730-808), who said Buddhism can only develop in an independent country, predicted that it was the terrain of his village *Cổ Pháp* which would produce a politician surnamed *Lý* who could secure the national independence. The prediction came true. Two centuries later, in 1010, *Lý Công Uẩn* started the *Lý* dynasty, which was powerful for two centuries (1010-1225). Monk *Vạn Hạnh* advised king *Lý Công Uẩn* to move the capital from *Hoa Lư* to *Thăng Long* (modern *Hà Nội*) with the intention to keep the national independence long. It is monk *Pháp Thuận* who utilized prophecy to help king *Lê Đại Hành* (980-1005) seize power for ending the confusion in the royal court at the end of the *Đinh* dynasty. One day king *Lê Đại Hành* asked *Pháp Thuận* about the stability of the country, the monk answered the verse "*Quốc Tộ*" (國祚):

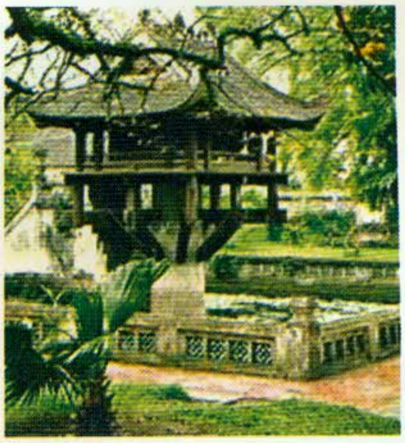
"國 祚 如 藤 絡
Quốc tộ như đằng lạc
南 天 里 太 平
Nam thiên lý thái bình
旡 為 居 殿 閣
Vô vi cư điện các
處 處 息 刀 兵
Xứ xứ tức đao binh."

(The state destiny is like winding strings,
The Southern heaven opens the prosperous and peaceful sight.
Vô vi lies in the royal palace,
Everywhere stops hostility.)

Pháp Thuận implies that it is the talented virtuous leader of the government who will lead the nation to the unity among various sections of the people and make the nation powerful. It can be said that the verse "*Quốc Tộ*" (國 祚) is the first Vietnamese theory of government.

Thảo Đường Thiền School And South March

In 1069, under the *Lý* dynasty, one more *Thiền* school – *Thảo Đường* – was founded to meet a new demand of the country. After the war between Vietnam – Champa in 1069, *Chế Củ* offered three provinces – *Địa Lý*, *Ma Linh* and *Bố Chính* (now *Hà Tĩnh*, *Quảng Bình* and *Quảng Trị*) – for ransoming his capture and King *Lý Thánh Tông* accepted. And among the prisoners of war was a Chinese monk named *Thảo Đường*. He was soon appointed Imperial Preceptor and a new *Thiền* school was founded bearing his name. This school spent nearly 150 years with 18 *Thiền* Masters; however, half clergy, half laity. In *Vinitaruci Thiền* school survived over 600 years but all generations were monks; and, *Vô Ngôn Thông* surviving around 250 years had 3 laymen. This means that the impact of Buddhism shifted gradually from clergy to laity.



Một Cột Pagoda under the Lý Dynasty

Trúc Lâm Thiền School

This moving trend increased day by day and reached its peak when *Trúc Lâm Thiền* school was founded by King *Trần Nhân Tông* (1258-1309)[12] with his views "*Cư trần lạc đạo*" (居 塵 樂 道) which means *Living happily in the world* :

居 塵 樂 道 且 隨 緣
Cư trần lạc đạo thả tuỳ duyên
飢 則 餐 兮 困 則 眠
Cơ tắc xan hề khốn tắc miên
家 中 有 寶 休 尋 覓
Gia trung hữu bảo hưu tầm mịch
對 境 無 心 莫 問 禪
Đối cảnh vô tâm mạc vấn thiền.

(Living happily in the world according to one's conditions
Eating when hungry, sleeping when tired
Treasure is at home, stop searching for it

Facing to an object without hallucination, don't ask what is Zen?)

In 1307 Champa King offered two provinces – *Thuận Châu* and *Hoá Châu* (now *Thừa Thiên* and *Quảng Nam*) to King *Trần Nhân Tông* for his marriage to *Nhân Tông*' princess. The expansion of the new territories and the menace of aggressions put forward an urgent demand for population growth.

Vietnam continued its Southward march and Buddhism as a cultural instrument was necessary to stabilize the new territories.

The advent of the *Lê* dynasty (1428 – 1527) marked a newly developing period of secular Buddhism based on the idea of "*Cư trần lạc đạo*" by King *Trần Nhân Tông*. The *Lê* kings were ardent supporters of Buddhism. King *Lê Thánh Tông*, the most typical Buddhist in this time, was well-versed in both Confucianism and Buddhism.

Period Of New Buddhism

In 1698 Lord *Nguyễn Phúc Chu* completed the South march and from this time onwards the spirit of "*Cư trần lạc đạo*" was changed to "*Cư Nho mộ Thích*" (居儒慕釋) which means *living as Confucian but loving Buddhism*. This means that the Buddhists of this period must master the Confucian art of governing the country. Six *Thiền* schools, i.e., *Tào Động*, *Trúc Lâm*, *Quốc Ân*, *Thập Tháp*, *Chúc Thánh* and *Liễu Quán* during this time have still existed until now.

In 1856 French troops attacked *Đà Nẵng* and after that they presented new pressures on the Vietnamese Buddhists from 1883 to 1945. Under foreign rule, Vietnamese Buddhists urgently felt the need to create a more socially and politically engaged Buddhism. Many eminent Buddhists were ardent patriots and leaders of insurgent movements; intellectual Vietnamese Buddhists were inspired by reformed movements in other East Asian countries in the 1920s and, in particular, by the Chinese monk *Thái Hư Đại Sư* (1890 - 1947).

In 1930's three new Associations of Buddhist studies were established and Buddhist magazines / periodicals in colloquial Vietnamese (*Quốc ngữ* - Roman script) began to appear with a view to addressing political and social issues[13]. In this period a number of Buddhist texts (in Chinese) were published like *Phật giáo Sơ học*, *Phật giáo vấn đáp*, *Phật giáo Giáo khoa Thư*, and Buddhist texts in *Quốc ngữ* like *Kim Cương*, *Pháp Hoa*, *Lăng Nghiêm*.

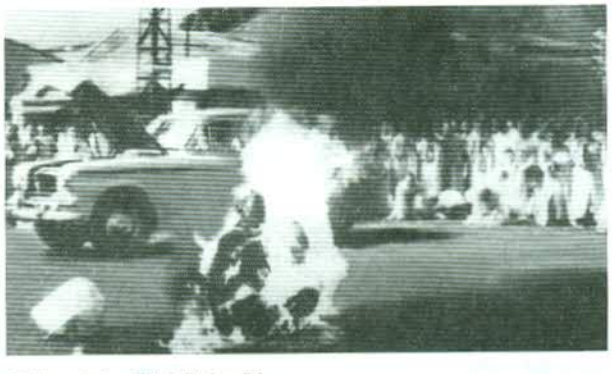
All were guided and supported by learned clergy and laity with exposure to Western culture. There were attempts at consolidating three Associations into a unified *Saṅgha*, but the efforts were hindered by the repressive policy of the French and a lack of communication.

Postcolonial Struggle

Hồ Chí Minh set up the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1945, the Buddhists participated in the construction of the country and later on in the resistance against the French.

When King *Bảo Đại* (1913 – 1997) assumed the role of head of state of South Vietnam in 1949, he signed Decree No. 10 in 1951, which followed the French policy of relegating all religions to the status of "public associations," with the exception of Catholic and Protestant missions. On assuming power in 1955, *Ngô Đình Diệm* (1901 – 1963) retained Decree No. 10. In 1957 *Diệm* also eliminated the Buddha's birthday from the list of official holidays.

Diệm's policy toward Buddhism led to many Buddhist resistance movements during the 1960's, especially the self-immolation monk *Thích Quảng Đức* on June 11, 1963, which partly resulted in the overthrow of *Diệm*'s government. The Vietnamese Unified Buddhist Sangha was founded in South Vietnam and in 1964 *Vạn Hạnh* University, the 1st Buddhist one, was established in Saigon and eminent monks such as *Thích Trí Quang* and *Thích Tâm Châu* became household names. A charismatic young monk with an American education, *Thích Nhất Hạnh* (1926 -), the founder of *Tròng thanh niên phụng sự xã hội* (School of Youth for Social Service) at *Vạn Hạnh* University, became an overnight celebrity. However, due to inexperience on the part of the monks, division among the leadership, and a lack of a capable lay Buddhists, Vietnamese Buddhism failed to seize a rare opportunity to reform and explore the potential of Buddhist culture in its country.



Self-immolation Thích Quảng Đức

B) Vietnamese Buddhism In The Present:

In 1975 Vietnam was unified after 30 years of foreign aggressions and civil wars. This was a good condition for the unification of Buddhism in Vietnam.

In order to unify all activities of all Buddhist in the whole country a Conference was held on November 7, 1981 in Hanoi. According to it nine Vietnamese Buddhist sects / associations[14] nationwide were unified in an organisation called "*Giáo hội Phật giáo Việt Nam*" (Vietnam Buddhist Sangha)[15] with its motto: "Dharma – Nation – Socialism." The Sangha is divided into two ranks: a) Central and, b) Local. In the Central the Sangha includes a Sangha Patronage Council (*Hội đồng Chứng minh*) and a Dhamma Executive Council (*Hội đồng Trị sự*) including 09 departments and 01 institute as follows: 1) *Tăng s* (Sangha affairs), 2) *Giáo dục tăng ni* (Training monks and nuns), 3) *Hoằng pháp* (Dharma propagation), 4) *Hướng dẫn Phật tử* (Guidance of laity), 5) *Nghi l* (Buddhist rites), 6) *Văn hóa* (Buddhist culture), 7) *Kinh t – Tài chánh* (Economics and Finance), 8) *Từ thiện xã hội* (Social charity), 9) *Phật giáo quốc tế* (International Buddhism), and 10) *Viện Nghiên cứu Phật học Việt Nam* (Vietnam Buddhist Research Institute). The Local Sangha in cities and provinces also have the same works as for the Central except the 10th.

In general, the activities of Buddhism in Vietnam after 1975 developed more favourably than earlier. According to the report of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in January, 2011 :

There have been 46,495 monks and nuns in the whole country – Mahayana: 34,062; Theravada: 9,379 [Khmer: 8,574]; Mendicant: 3,054. There also have existed 14, 778 monasteries and temples – Mahayana: 13, 710; Theravada: 527 and Mendicant: 541.

Over 200 monk and nun students are studying abroad and over 100 have returned homeland after completing their Ph.D or M.A.'degrees.

There exist 4 Buddhist Institutes of training for a B. A. degree in *Hà Nội*, *Huế*, *Hồ Chí Minh* and *Cần Thơ*; 8 Buddhist colleges and 30 Buddhist high schools in the whole country.

There exist over 65 *Tuệ Tĩnh Đường* (Buddhist clinics) nationwide. The Sangha spent over 709 billion VND (≈ 35,450,000 USD) for the social and relief works in the whole year of 2010.

As for the Vietnamese Buddhists abroad, the Sangha has a number of intimate foundations or persons in North America, Australia and Europe (Germany, Czech, Hungary, Russia, Poland, Ukraine).

In short, as history is a witness, right from the beginning up to now, Vietnamese Buddhism as a socio-political entity always adapts in order to bring the benefit and welfare to its people and nation.

Vietnam Buddhist Institute in Hochiminh City

Notes

[1] Lê Mạnh Thát, *Lịch sử Phật giáo Việt Nam*: NXB Thuận Hóa, 1999, pp. 19 – 22.

[2] *Thiền Uyển Tập Anh* (Outstanding Figures of the *Thiền* community). The text was probably compiled by a Vietnamese *Thiền* Master, *Kim Sơn*, around 1337. This is an important Buddhist text mentioning the biographies of 68 *Thiền* Masters.

[3] Phan Huy Le et al, *Lịch sử Việt Nam*, I, Hà Nội, 1991, p. 250..

[4] Ibid.

[5] *Hồ* is referred to Indian monks.

[6] Lê Mạnh Thát, *Opcit.*, p, 147.

[7] Kenneth K.S.Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, Princeton, 1964, p. 37.

[8] *Cao Tăng Truyện*, a Chinese text, compiled by *Huệ Hạo* in 519 A.D. in 14 fasciculi.

[9] *Ānāpānasati*, the text of mindfulness on in-and-out breathing.

[10] It means 10.000 Springs; figuratively, prosperity and welfare.

[11] *Thiền* or Ch'an in Chinese, Zen in Japan, meditation in English.

[12] King *Trần Nhân Tông* was a hero and Zen Master. During his reign there were two well-known conferences, *Bình Than* between kings and officers in 1282 and another *Diên Hồng* between kings and elders all over the country in 1284. As a result, 500,000 Mongol troops were defeated in 1285 and 1288. He was also a poet and founder of the *Trúc Lâm* Zen school, the first one of the Viets, which did unite other contemporary alien Zen schools, met the religious need of the people and contributed to the construction of an influential, civilized and independent *Đại Việt* (Ancient name of Vietnam) against the exotic impacts. It is in the reign of King *Trần Nhân Tông*, Buddhism in Vietnam reached its peak.

[13] In 1930 *Hội Nam kỳ Nghiên cứu Phật học* was founded in *Sài Gòn* and its magazine named *Từ Bi Âm* was fisrtly issued on March 1, 1930. In 1932 *Hội An nam Phật học* was founded in *Huế* and its magazine named *Viên Âm* was fisrtly issued on December 1, 1933. In 1934 *Hội Phật giáo Bắc kỳ* was founded in *Hà Nội* and its magazine named *Đuốc Tuệ* was issued in 1935.

[14] The nine asosociations are: 1) *Hội Phật giáo thống nhất Việt Nam*; 2) *Giáo hội Phật giáo Việt Nam thống nhất*; 3) *Giáo hội Phật giáo cổ truyền Việt Nam*; 4) *Giáo hội Tăng già Nguyên thuỷ Việt Nam*; 5) *Ban liên lạc Phật giáo yêu nước*; 6) *Giáo hội Thiên thai giáo quán tông*; 7) *Giáo hội Tăng già Khất sĩ Việt nam*; 8)*Hội đoàn kết sư sãi yêu nước Tây Nam B* ; and 9) *Hội Phật học Nam Việt*.

[15] The Buddhist Organisation was recognized by the Government.

Namgyal Stupa at Sakyamuni Dharma Centre, Petaling Jaya - this is one of a handful of Tibetan-style Stupas in Malaysia.

The 30.2-metre bronze statue of Kuan Yin Bodhisattva at Kek Lok Si Temple in Penang.

The Kek Lok Si Temple in Penang lighted up during the Chinese New Year Celebration.

ESSAY 14

Buddhism in Malaysia

P.L. Wong

Introduction

With its multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious society, Malaysia is one of the few countries where different races, cultures and religions meet in one huge melting pot. Its population is mainly made up of Malays, Chinese, Indians and others. The majority ethnic group, the Malays, which constitutes 53% of the citizens, practises Islam. The Chinese form 26% of the citizens and they mainly follow Buddhism (interlaced with Confucianism, Taoism and traditional beliefs), or Christianity. The Indians who form nearly 8% of the citizens are mainly Hindus. The remainder of the citizens is made up of other ethnic groups and they follow a variety of religions including the ones stated earlier.[1]

Similarly, the development of Buddhism in Malaysia reflects the country's multi-faceted outlook. Malaysia is one of the very few countries where all the three major Buddhist traditions, i.e. Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana, are embraced by its devotees. As all these three major traditions are flourishing in the country, many Malaysian Buddhists do not follow just one particular Buddhist tradition. While they may stay rooted in a particular tradition as a base, they may also take part in a religious activity of another tradition. Thus, one may find a Malaysian Buddhist who mainly follows Mahayana Buddhism, offering dana in a Sinhalese or Thai Theravada temple, and later, participating in a blessing ceremony by a Vajrayana Tibetan master. Similarly, a person who largely follows Theravada practice, may participate in the chanting of a Mahayana sutra in a Chinese Buddhist temple, and then head to a Vajrayana centre to listen to a Dharma talk by a visiting Tibetan Rinpoche. Herein lies the beauty and uniqueness of Buddhism in Malaysia.

This essay seeks to examine the beginnings of Buddhism in the country, the development of Buddhism up to the present day covering all the major traditions, and Buddhist education and institutions in the country. This is followed by a discussion of the contribution of Buddhism to Malaysian society, and the current state of Buddhism in the country. Lastly, the challenges facing Buddhism in the country will also be examined.

Early History of Buddhism in Malaysia

In trying to trace the early history of the country, one is faced with a lot of difficulties, not least of which there is a complete lack of indigenous written sources before the sixteenth century CE. The earliest extant work in Malay, the *Sĕjarah Mĕlayu*, is attributed to a date around the middle of the sixteenth century CE.[2] Thus, scholars trying to reconstruct the early history of Malaysia utilized archaeological findings and textual sources of Greek, Indian, Chinese and Arab origin. It is to these sources that must be turned to in tracing the early history of Buddhism in the country.

The time period during which Buddhism was introduced to the country is not known with certainty. According to the tradition preserved in the Ceylonese chronicles, two Buddhist monks, Sona and Uttara, were sent by Emperor Asoka to preach Buddhism in *Suvarṇabhūmi* after the Third Buddhist Council.[3] While the actual location of *Suvarṇabhūmi* ("Land of Gold") is in dispute, Professor Wheatley pointed out that it was not unlikely that the name came to be applied to the whole of the Malay Archipelago and the Malay Peninsula.[4] Thus, there is a possibility that Buddhism may have been introduced to Malaysia as early as the third century BCE.

Barring the story of Sona and Uttara, it is likely that Buddhism was introduced to the country in the second century CE. Chinese records mention petty Indianized states on the Malay Peninsula from the second century CE.[5] The first centuries of the Common Era saw the expansion of the Indian civilization to Southeast Asia, which was commercial in origin. That trade was the motivating force in the Indian expansion is clear from the Sanskrit names given to parts of Southeast Asia like *Takkola* ("market of cardamom"), *Karpūradvīpa* ("island of camphor"), *Narikeladvīpa* ("island of coconut palms") and *Suvarṇabhūmi* ("land of gold"). Given the Malay Peninsula's strategic location on regional trade routes, it is therefore likely that Buddhism was introduced to the country in association with Indian trading.

The likelihood that Buddhism was introduced to Malaysia in the second century CE seems to have been given further credence by the recent discovery of a clay brick monument, built with detailed geometrical precision, in the Sungai Batu area of the Bujang Valley in the state of Kedah (Sanskrit name *Kaṭāha*; Chinese name *Chieh-cha*). This monument has been scientifically dated to 110 CE, making it the oldest man-made structure to be recorded in South-

East Asia.[6] The monument, which is believed to be have been used for ritualistic purposes, was found surrounded by remnants of advanced iron smelting facilities equipped with furnaces as well as brick jetties built along a river bank. With this indisputable evidence that international trading activities had taken place in Kedah in that period coupled with Chinese records of Indianised states on the Malay Peninsula from the second century CE, it is therefore likely that Buddhism (together with Hinduism) were introduced to Malaysia in that period.

While the precise period of the introduction of Buddhism into the country is not known with certainty, it is nevertheless clear that Buddhism had already gained a foothold in Malaysia by the fourth century CE based on stone inscriptions found in the northwest of Peninsular Malaysia. The inscriptions were written in Sanskrit and historians conclude they were carved around 400 CE.[7] The first antiquities in the Kedah area were discovered in the 1840s by James Low, an officer of the East India Company. At Bukit Meriam, he found a stone inscription which consists of two Buddhist verses in Sanskrit inscribed in the characters of the oldest Pallava alphabet. The second one runs: "Karma accumulates through lack of knowledge. Karma is the cause of rebirth. Through knowledge it comes about that no karma is effected, and through absence of karma there is no rebirth."[8] South of the Muda River, in the region now known as Seberang Perai, Low found another inscription bearing a depiction of a stupa and the same karma text.[9] This stone is now known as the Buddhagupta Stone because it tells of a sea captain of that name.

From the fifth to eleventh century CE, archaeological findings suggest that Buddhism was well established in the country. A stone inscription, also in Sanskrit, discovered from Bukit Coras, north of Merbok in Kedah, has a common Buddhist expression of faith found widely in Southeast Asia and India.[10] Another inscribed stone was discovered in 1979 at Kampung Sungai Mas (within the Bujang Valley of Kedah) by local residents. Believed to date from the fifth or sixth century CE, it depicts a square building supporting a stupa, surmounted by multi-tiered ceremonial parasol, only part of which remains. The inscription contains the karma text, with a brief addition in an unknown script.[11]

Buddhist image found at various sites and displyed at the Bujang Archaeological Museum in Kedah. (Photo courtesy of Chn Yen Ling)

Besides the stone inscriptions, Buddhist and Hindu images of bronze, terracotta and stone have been found at various Peninsular Malaysian sites, but the most numerous yields have come from the Bujang Valley of Kedah. The oldest bronze Buddhist image yet found in Malaysia was unearthed in 1941 by the archaeologist Dorothy Quaritch Wales from a ruined brick temple plinth in the Bujang Valley.[12] The right hand of this image is in the position of *varadamudrā*, one of the hand gestures which characterize the transcendent Buddhas of Mahayana Buddhism. This gesture is characteristic of the northern Indian Gupta style of the fourth to fifth century CE, which influenced other regions in India and Southeast Asia. This bronze standing Buddha image has been dated to the sixth to seventh century CE. Besides this, a green stone Buddha head dated from the seventh to ninth century CE, and a small terracotta seated Avalokitesvara dated around the tenth to eleventh century CE, have also been found in, respectively, the Sungai Mas and Pengkalan Bujang area of the Bujang Valley.[13] In addition, various sculptures have been discovered in the valley, including four terracotta Buddhist images and one of bronze. Based on the style of the best preserved terracotta seated Buddha, the Buddhist images have been dated to the tenth to eleventh century CE.[14]

In the Kinta Valley of Perak, five bronze Buddhist images have been dredged up since 1908 during tin mining operations. Using the gestures and garment styles as a guide, scholars have dated the images from the sixth to the ninth century CE.[15] The first of the five Buddhist bronzes discovered in Perak was dredged up from a tin mine near Ipoh in 1931. Measuring 46cm in height, this standing Buddha image went missing during World War Two. Another bronze standing Buddha was discovered 18m deep in a tin mine at Tanjung Rambutan, Perak. The remaining three Buddhist bronze images found in Perak were those of Avalokitesvara.

According to Professor Dr Nik Hassan Shuhaimi, "All the Buddhist images found in Peninsular Malaysia, dating from the fifth to eleventh century CE, are believed to have been produced locally using adaptations of Indian iconographic styles. This influence is evidence of the strong relationship between the Malay Peninsula and India during that era, while the finding of these images also shows the importance of the kingdoms in the Bujang and Kinta valleys."[16]

Apart from archaeological findings in Kedah and Perak, Buddhist votive tablets made of clay and dated around the ninth or tenth century CE have been discovered in caves in Perlis and Kelantan.[17] In East Malaysia, Buddhist and Hindu relics have also been found in Santubong, Sarawak's richest protohistoric archaeological region.[18]

Chinese records also suggest that Buddhism was well established in Peninsular Malaysia during this period. On the east coast of the peninsula, the kingdom of Langkasuka was a prominent port of call for Chinese Buddhist pilgrims voyaging westward. Langkasuka's precise location is unknown but most scholars agree that it was somewhere in the vicinity of Patani in present-day southern Thailand.[19] About 607 CE, a Chinese embassy mentioned passing "the mountains of the country of Langkasuka" just before reaching their goal of Chi-tu.[20] While the location of Chi-tu or the "Red Earth Land" is still not confirmed, academic opinion favours the interior of the Peninsular Malaysian state of Kelantan.[21] The people of Chi-tu were reported to be Buddhists and in the Chinese documentary account of the visit to the kingdom by Sui envoys from 607 CE to 610 CE, it was stated that the king ascended the throne when his father abdicated in order to preach Buddhism to the world.[22]

Another place on the Malay Peninsula which was recorded by the Chinese was Pan-pan. In 530 CE, 535 CE, and between 666 and 669 CE, Pan-pan sent tribute to China including pearls and perfume. While Professor Wheatley located Pan-pan on the isthmus with its southern territory bordering Langkasuka or modern Pattani in southern Thailand[23], Dr Miksic said that "it may have been in the Kelantan or Trengganu area"[24] of Peninsular Malaysia. Quoting from Ma Tuan-lin's *Wen-hsien T'ung-k'ao*, Professor Wheatley highlighted that in the kingdom of Pan-pan, "There are ten monasteries where Buddhist monks and nuns study their canon. They eat all types of meat but abstain from wine. There is also a monastery of religious devotees who partake neither of meat nor wine . . . The Buddhist priests are commonly called pi-chiu (*bhikṣu*)"[25]

The state of Kedah was also a stopover for Chinese Buddhist pilgrims en route to India. The most famous pilgrim, I-tsing, sailed from China to Srivijaya in south-east Sumatra in 671 CE. At Srivijaya, I-tsing noted that there were over a thousand Buddhist monks, and their rules and ceremonies were the same as in India.[26] According to Professor Hall, the fact that I-tsing spent six months in Srivijaya studying Sanskrit grammar before going on to India is evidence of Srivijaya's importance as a centre of Mahayanist learning.[27] From Srivijaya, he sailed to Malayu, also in south-east Sumatra, and then to Kedah, before voyaging across the Bay of Bengal to India. In 671 CE, during I-tsing's stay, Kedah was still an independent kingdom; but on his return voyage in 685 CE, I-tsing again stopped over in Kedah and reported that the port was then part of the empire of Srivijaya.[28] I-tsing's record also mentions other Buddhist monks who followed the same itinerary to and from India.

From the seventh to the eleventh century CE, the west coast of the Malay Peninsula was under the powerful Srivijayan maritime empire which controlled much of Sumatra. The Chinese described Srivijaya as a "bipolar polity". While most scholars agree that Palembang in south-east Sumatra was the southern base of the empire, Kedah was probably the northern pole[29]. Srivijaya was a well-known centre of Mahayana Buddhism from the seventh to the eleventh century century CE. The renowned Tibetan Buddhist reformist, Atisa, is said to have studied at Srivijaya from 1011 to 1023 CE under Dharmakirti.[30] Srivijaya had family links with the rulers of the Sailendra Dynasty of Java that built many Buddhist monuments, including the famous temple of Borobodur in central Java.

Srivijaya's power began to wane from the eleventh century CE. In 1025 CE, the Tamil-controlled Chola kingdom of South India, a large maritime power of the time, attacked the Srivijayan Empire. After conquering all the main Srivijayan centres, the Cholas established their colonial capital at Kedah. This seems to have exerted strong political and artistic influence over the Kedah region as many South Indian-style Hindu shrines were built during this period. In the twelth century CE, the Chola kingdom declined and Kedah reasserted its independence. From architectural remains and artefacts found in the Bujang Valley of Kedah, archaeologists have deduced that Hinduism was the prevailing religion in that area from the eleventh to thirteenth century CE.[31]

Due to the revival of Hinduism, the early period of Buddhist influence in the peninsula started to wane, and then was brought to a close by the growing prevalence of Islam as a commercial and political force in the region. The spread of Islam, introduced by Arab and Indian traders, brought the Hindu-Buddhist era in the Malay Peninsula to an end by the turn of the fourteenth century. Around the beginning of the fifteenth century CE, the

Malay-Hindu rulers of the kingdom of Malacca were converted to Islam and Malacca became a centre for the further spread of Islam throughout the Malay Peninsula. During this period, Muslim kingdoms emerged on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula in Perak and Kedah, as well as in Pahang, Kelantan and Trengganu.[32]

Though Buddhism largely disappeared from the Malay Peninsula at this time, traces of its influence remained in the cultures of the local people. The performing arts in the states of Kedah, Perlis and Kelantan are strongly influenced by Buddhist legends and stories.[33] Dance forms such as the *menora* which portrays Buddhist Jataka stories, and the *mak yong* are testimonies that Buddhism was once a powerful and cultural influence in Malaysia.

Development of Buddhism from the Nineteenth Century CE to the Present Day

It is generally agreed that the arrival of a large number of Chinese immigrants in the nineteenth century CE during the British colonial period in Peninsular Malaysia marked the start of the second wave of Buddhist influence in Malaysia. While Chinese immigrants had been coming to the Malay Peninsula since the time of Admiral Cheng Ho in the fifteenth century CE, it was only during the nineteenth century CE that saw an influx of Chinese immigrants. These Chinese immigrants came to work mainly in the tin mines. Besides this, there were also Chinese immigrants who came to trade and to work in other occupations. This was a time favourable to the growth of Buddhism, as well as other religions, because the official British policy was one of non-interference in the religions of the local people.

The Chinese immigrants who came mainly from the south of China brought with them their own Confucianist and Taoist beliefs but they also prayed to Kuan Yin Bodhisattva (Avalokistesvara). Due to these traditional practices and philosophies which were inherited from their forefathers, even up to today, the Buddhism which is practised by the majority of Chinese in Malaysia is a combination of Confucian values, Taoist beliefs, indigenous Chinese folk practices, but mainly Mahayana Buddhism. While the growth of many pure Buddhist temples, associations and societies in the second half of the twentieth century has increased the number of pure Buddhists in the country, they are still in the minority when compared to the mixed Buddhists who form the majority among the Chinese in Malaysia.

A peculiar feature of the Chinese Buddhists in Malaysia, who form the bulk of the Buddhist population in the country, is that the Mandarin speaking Chinese are mainly Mahayana Buddhists while the English speaking Chinese are mainly Theravada or Vajrayana Buddhists. Such a development is not surprising as Mahayana Buddhism was re-introduced into the country by Chinese monks who came from China. On the other hand, the Sinhalese missionaries who nurtured early Theravada Buddhist development during the British colonial days were English speaking, while the Tibetan Buddhist masters who introduced Vajrayana Buddhism to the country from the 1970s to 1990s are/were also mainly English speaking.

During the nineteenth century CE, Sinhalese immigrants from Sri Lanka, though much smaller in number, also came to seek work, particularly in the railway and rubber plantation industries, as well as the colonial Malayan Civil Service. These Sinhalese immigrants brought with them the Theravada form of Buddhism. Due to geographical proximity to Thailand, Theravada Buddhism had also earlier spilled across the border to the northern states of Kedah, Perlis, Penang, Perak, and Kelantan.

Mahayana Buddhism

When the Chinese immigrants first came to Malaysia, they were more concerned with building clan or ancestral associations. Most of the immigrants were illiterate or poorly educated peasants and labourers, so Buddhist and Taoists monks were brought to run the temples and look after the spiritual needs of the immigrant Chinese. Due to the cultural heritage, the earliest temples built in the country were mainly mixed temples. It was only later that monks from China came to establish pure Buddhist temples in different parts of the country.

The oldest Mahayana Buddhist temple in the country is the Cheng Hoon Teng Temple in Malacca. Founded in the 1600s by the Chinese Kapitan Tay Kie Ki alias Tay Hong Yong, the main temple hall is dedicated to Kuan Yin Bodhisattva (Avalokistesvara). However, this temple is not a pure Buddhist temple as it houses other non-Buddhist deities, and it also propagates Taoism and Confucianism besides Buddhism. Similarly, the Kong Hock Keong Temple in Penang (popularly known as the Kuan Yin Teng Temple) which was built in the eighteenth century and also dedicated to Kuan Yin Bodhisattva is also not a pure Mahayana Buddhist temple. Today, these two temples are perhaps better known as tourist spots rather than as Dharma centres, although it is common to see thousands of devotees thronging these two temples during various Mahayana Buddhist festivals.[34]

The earliest pure Mahayana Buddhist temple in the country is the Kek Lok Si Temple, the construction of which started in 1891 but only completed in 1904 and officially opened in 1905. The construction of the temple was started under Ven. Miao Lian who came to Penang from Fuchow, China in 1887. Since the official opening of the temple, there have been a number of additions. In 1930, the seven-storey main pagoda of the temple or the Pagoda of 10,000 Buddhas was completed. This pagoda combines a Chinese octagonal base with a middle tier of Thai design, and a Burmese crown. In 2002, a 30.2m bronze statue of Kuan Yin Bodhisattva was completed and opened to the public. The Kek Lok Si Temple which is the Chinese *Hokkien* dialect for "Temple of Supreme Bliss" or "Temple of *Sukhavati*" is reputed to be the largest Buddhist temple in Southeast Asia. The temple conducts Mahayana Buddhist prayers and retreats for its devotees and is also used for the ordination of monks and nuns following the Mahayana tradition. The temple is also a very popular tourist destination.

Founded in 1925, the Penang Buddhist Association was formed by a group of Malaysian Chinese Buddhists "who desired to study Buddhism in its pure form, uncorrupted by elements of Taoism that is prevalent among the local Chinese." From the stated aim of the association, it was clear that this group of people realized that Buddhism was not properly disseminated in the country at that time. During the early years of its formation, the group was taught, advised and spiritually supported by Ven. Pemaratana, the then chief monk of the Mahindarama Buddhist Temple in Penang.

A Youth Circle of the Penang Buddhist Association to cater to both the Chinese and English speaking membership was set up in 1955 by the American Buddhist monk, Ven. Dr. Sumangalo, who was a resident monk at the temple from 1955 until his death in 1963. He called himself neither a Theravadin nor a Mahayanist but simply a follower of Lord Buddha and introduced innovations which included the singing of Buddhist hymns, and a Sunday Dharma School.[35] The youth organization he established became the forerunner of many similar Buddhist youth groups throughout the country such as the Federation of Malayan Buddhist Youth Fellowships, which later was dissolved to be replaced by the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia.

Due to its historical linkage, it is not surprising that the Penang Buddhist Association supports both the Mahayana and the Theravada tradition, although it is a Mahayana temple. The association delivers the message of Buddhism through activities such as meditation, Dharma talks, keeping eight precepts retreats, prayers and traditional ceremonies as well as dana and charitable acts. This include donating rations and food items to the poor and needy families, blood donation drive, etc. It also runs a kindergarten, a Sunday Dharma school, a senior citizen's home and provides free medical services.

In 1935, a Buddhist nun, Ven. Fang Lian, who came from Xiamen in China, set up the Phor Tay Institution (a nunnery) in Penang to propagate the Dharma, to promote Dharma education and to care for young orphans. The name "Phor Tay" is the Chinese term for "bodhi" which means enlightenment in Sanskrit. After the demise of Ven. Fang Lian in 1937, her followers continued her mission and initiated secular education through free school. The orphanage and free school, which provided afternoon Buddhist classes, were started in 1940. In 1946, the Phor Tay Primary School commenced operations. The Phor Tay High School, which follows the government school curriculum in addition to Dharma classes, was started in 1952 and was officially registered with the government in 1954. Following the acceptance of subsidies from the government to become a government assisted secondary school, the school was split into the Phor Tay High School (government assisted secondary school) and Phor Tay Private High School, with the latter being independently run by the School Board. Previously an all girls' school, the Phor Tay High School was converted to a co-educational school after relocation of its premises to the south-western part of Penang in 2009. Today, these three schools (two high schools and a primary school) cater to over 4,000 students.

Any study on the modern development of Mahayana Buddhism in Malaysia would not be complete without the mentioning of the late Ven. Chuk Mor. His influence among the Chinese-educated Buddhists in the country is equal to that of the late Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda among the English-educated Buddhists. Born in the Zhejiang Province of China in 1913, Ven. Chuk Mor was fully ordained as a monk in 1928. He then went to study at the Minnan Buddhist Institute founded by Ven. Master Tai Xu, the great reformer who transformed Chinese Mahayana Buddhism into a modern religion after the Chinese revolution. It was from that time that Ven. Chuk Mor began his life-long career as a prolific Buddhist writer. In 1953, he was invited to propagate the Dharma in Thailand and from there he proceeded to Penang, Malaysia in 1954. In Penang, he was invited to serve the Phor Tay Institution and he also taught Buddhism part-time at the Phor Tay High School. From then onwards, Ven. Chuk Mor contributed tremendously to help build Malaysian Buddhism to what it is today.

An influential writer and crowd-drawing speaker, Ven. Chuk Mor's many Dharma talks and writings published in newspapers, magazines and books educated many Malaysians to practise the correct and real version of Buddhism and discard all incorrect and superstitious beliefs previously held by them. In his younger days he travelled widely to give talks around the country. Besides his individual trips, in 1959, he led a Dharma Propagating Party to tour five states in Peninsular Malaysia, stirring up interest in Buddhism wherever he went.[36]

In July 1962, Ven. Chuk Mor founded the Triple Wisdom Hall in Penang to teach Chinese Buddhism to devotees. This became the first Chinese Buddhist temple in Malaysia where systematic Chinese Buddhism was taught. Today, the Triple Wisdom Hall has become an important centre of Buddhist activities in Penang. Besides providing the usual temple activities, there are also Dharma classes, meditation courses, Sunday Dharma School, and youth activities. The Triple Wisdom Hall also runs Ven. Chuk Mor Foundation which provides scholarships for Buddhists (both sangha and lay-persons) pursuing Buddhist education, and it is also building a ten-storey Venerable Chuk Mor Educational Centre that is expected to be completed in 2012.

Another significant contribution of Ven. Chuk Mor was the formation of the Malaysian Buddhist Association (MBA). When he first came to Malaysia, the Mahayana Buddhist community in Malaysia was not properly organised. Apart from the temples, there were only a few regional Buddhist associations and societies. Together with some other elderly monks, Ven. Chuk Mor established the Malayan (later Malaysian) Buddhist Association in 1959. It was the first attempt to unite all Mahayana temples, organizations, sangha and lay-persons into a national body. Ven. Chuk Mor served as its first president until he stepped down voluntarily twelve years later. Today, the MBA has more than 700 Buddhist temples, monasteries, meditation/retreat centres and organizations under its wing, thirty-five branches throughout Malaysia, and about 30,000 individual members (sangha and lay-persons).[37] The branches and Buddhist temples and organizations are actively propagating the Buddha Dharma throughout the country through various activities. While the MBA is still largely an umbrella body for Mahayana Buddhist temples and organizations, it now has a small number of Theravada and Vajrayana temples and organizations under its wings, too. It also helps in the application of visas for foreign sangha members of all traditions. The MBA is recognized by the government as an organization representing the Buddhists in the country and is consulted by the government on matters pertaining to Buddhism. It is represented on the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism.

The MBA is the parent body for the Malaysian Buddhist Institute which was founded in 1969 to provide formal Buddhist education in Malaysia. Ven. Chuk Mor was a prime mover in the establishment of the Malaysian Buddhist Institute. Besides the Malaysian Buddhist Institute, the MBA also runs a Buddhist Free Clinic to offer free Chinese medicine and acupuncture to the poor, a kindergarten, Sunday free school and two homes for senior citizens. It also publishes a magazine quarterly and organizes Dharma talks and activities. With the collaboration of the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia, the MBA also runs the Malaysian Buddhist Examination Syndicate.

For his contribution to Buddhism, Ven. Chuk Mor was conferred one of the highest awards of the State of Penang, the *Darjah Setia Pangkuan Negeri* (DSPN). The award carries the title of *Datuk*, the nearest English equivalent to which might be the title of "Sir". He is the first Buddhist monk to be conferred this prestigious award.[38]

The second president of MBA was the late Ven. Kim Beng, who was then the chief abbot of Cheng Hoon Teng Temple in Malacca. He headed the organization for twenty-four years from 1971 to 1995 before he gave up the post due to his advanced age. He played an active role in the propagation of Buddhism in Malaysia and was also a prolific writer. The Malaysian Government honoured him with the *Jasa Setia Mahkota* (JSM) award for his contribution to Buddhism.

Ven. Chik Huang, the third President of MBA from 1995 to 2004, is also the chief abbot of a Buddhist temple in Seremban, Negri Sembilan. He is a well-known Chinese physician.

Besides the monks stated above, other monks who contributed towards the development of Mahayana Buddhism during that period were Ven. Hui Quan and the Ven. Guang Yu of Beow Hiang Lim in Penang, and Ven. Keng Aun who founded the Kwan Inn Teng Temple in Petaling Jaya. These two temples are also very popular Buddhist places of worship in the present day.

From the above, it can be seen that Buddhism from China has traditionally influenced Mahayana Buddhism in Malaysia. Most of the senior Mahayana Buddhist sangha members in the country during the most part of the twentieth century were born in China and migrated to Malaysia during the British colonial period in Malaysia or after mainland China became a Communist country in 1949. With most of these senior monks having passed away, it is the Malaysian-born monks who are now running the Mahayana Buddhist temples in the country. It is nevertheless to be noted that most of these Malaysian-born monks are disciples of the senior elders from China. For instance, the present abbot of the Triple Wisdom Hall is Malaysian-born Ven. Ji Chuan, a disciple of Ven. Chuk Mor. The present abbot of Kek Lok Si Temple is a Malaysian, Ven. Jit Heng who is also the current President of MBA.

One of the most senior Mahayana monks presently in the country is Ven. Boon Keng, the abbot of Ang Hock See Temple, a very popular Buddhist temple in Penang. Ven. Boon Keng is currently also one of the religious patrons/advisors of the MBA and the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia. Although a Mahayana monk, Ven. Boon Keng is open to all the Buddhist traditions, allowing his disciples to choose whichever tradition they wish to follow. Ven. Boon Keng and his more than forty disciples, some of whom have established temples or Buddhist centres, are now actively propagating the Buddha-Dharma throughout the country including the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. One of his disciples, Ven. Kai Yin, has set up the Santavana Forest Hermitage in the foothills of Mount Kinabalu in the East Malaysian state of Sabah to promote the practice of the Buddha's teachings.

Another Malaysian monk, Ven. Wei Wu, should also be mentioned for his contribution to Buddhism in Malaysia. Currently the Abbot of Than Hsiang Temple in Penang, Ven. Wei Wu started the Than Hsiang organization in 1985. Since then, Than Hsiang has become well known for its welfare and education activities in Malaysia. Its welfare activities include counselling, a free clinic and four homes for senior citizens in Penang, Kedah and Kuala Lumpur. In the field of education, it now runs ten kindergartens and four Sunday Dharma Schools. Ven. Wei Wu also established the non-sectarian International Buddhist College (IBC) in Thailand, which now offers Bachelor of Arts (BA), Master of Arts (MA) and PhD programmes in Buddhist studies. Although the IBC is located in Thailand, the MA and PhD programmes are available for students in Malaysia.

Since the 1980s, the Malaysian Buddhist scenario has also seen the setting up of centres by Buddhist groups from Taiwan. The most significant of these is the Fo Guang Shan group founded by Ven. Master Hsing Yun in Taiwan in 1967. Fo Guang Shan Malaysia is one of the many branches of Fo Guang Shan throughout the world. Since setting up the first centre in Selangor in the 1980s, the group now has twenty-two centres throughout Malaysia. The hub of Fo Guang Shan Malaysia is the Dong Zen Temple located in Jenjarom, Kuala Langat in the state of Selangor. Opened in 1994, the temple has since developed into an important cultural and educational centre. The temple is also a popular spot for local tourists especially during the Chinese New Year festival when local tourists flock to see its beautifully decorated lanterns and lights.

Another Taiwanese Buddhist group which has created an impact on the Malaysian scene is the Buddhist Tzu Chi Merit Society started by Ven. Cheng Yen in Taiwan in 1966. In Malaysia, Tzu Chi's activities in charity and welfare started in 1990. In 1993, the first official Tzu Chi centre was established in Penang, and was followed by similar centres in Melaka, Kuala Lumpur and many other towns in both West and East Malaysia.

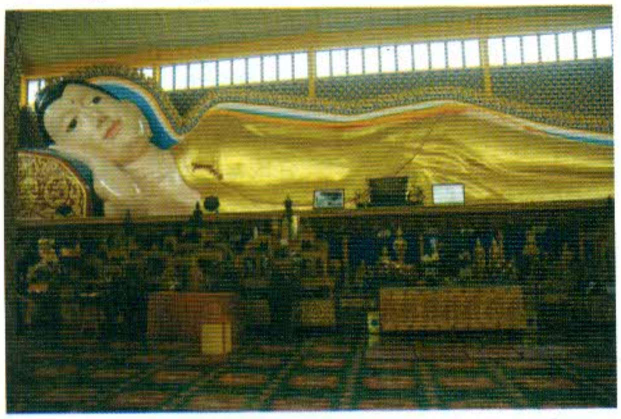
More recently, the Dharma Drum Mountain group from Taiwan which was founded by the late Ch'an Master, Ven. Sheng-yen, has also set up centres in Malaysia.

Besides the Buddhist groups from Taiwan, the international Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, which was founded by the late Ven. Master Hsuan Hua in 1959, has also established centres in Malaysia. The late Ven. Master and many of his Chinese and American disciples, visited Malaysia during the 1980s and 1990s to give Dharma teachings. The local disciples of Ven. Hsuan Hua have since started the Dharma Realm Guan Yin Sagely Monastery in Jalan Ampang, Kuala Lumpur, as well as other monasteries/branches in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Penang. Being located in the heart of Malaysia's capital city of Kuala Lumpur, the Dharma Realm Guan Yin Sagely Monastery is a very popular place of visit by both local and foreign tourists.

Theravada Buddhism

In Malaysia, the Theravada tradition is mainly followed by the English-speaking Chinese as well as the small number of Thai, Burmese and Sinhalese communities in the country. Theravada Buddhism had existed in Malaysia for centuries among the Thai ethnic community that lived along Peninsular Malaysia's northern border with Thailand. The northern peninsular states of Perlis, Kedah and Kelantan were once Thai territory until they were ceded to the British in 1909 to become part of the Unfederated Malay States of British Malaya. It is estimated that there are about 100 Thai temples, including small village *wats* in the country. These Thai temples, which are mainly located in the northern states, are run by the Thai bhikkhu sangha. Besides the Thai community, the Thai temples are also frequented by the Chinese who lived around the area. However, due to language differences, the activities of these temples are mainly limited to Pali chanting, blessing services and offering of dana to the monks.

Two of the largest Thai temples in Malaysia are located in the state of Kelantan. These are the Wat Machimmaram temple, which has a magnificent 50m-high sitting Buddha on the roof (the largest of its type in Asia); and the Wat Pothivihan Temple which, has a huge 40m-long reclining Buddha statue erected in 1973.



The 33 metre Reclining Buddha Statue at Wat Chaiya Managalaram in Penang. (Photo taken by Ong Ah Chya.)

One of oldest Thai temples in the country is the Wat Chaiya Mangalaram, the largest Thai temple in Penang. Founded in 1845 when the British colonial government granted a piece of land to the Thai community, the main shrine and pagoda of the temple were constructed in 1900.The famed reclining Buddha statue in the temple which measures 33m from end to end, was built in 1958. The temple is regarded as one of the most popular tourist spots in Penang.

While the activities of most of the Thai Buddhist temples in the country are mainly limited to Pali chanting, blessing services and offering of dana to the monks, one exception is the Malaysian Buddhist Meditation Centre (MBMC) in Penang which was officially opened in 1982. The centre was founded by Ven. Phra Khru Dhammabarnchanvud, a learned Thai monk trained in the Mahasi Sayadaw form of vipassana meditation. When he was the abbot, he gave teachings on Buddhism, including the abhidhamma and introduced vipassana meditation to the devotees. His activities attracted many young Malaysians, including high school students and university undergraduates. This was quite a contrast to other Thai temples that attracted the less educated and generally older Chinese devotees who came mainly for the ceremonies and rituals.[39] Today, the meditation method that is practised and taught in the centre continues to be based on the teachings of the late Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw who was the founder of the Mahasi Meditation Centre in Yangon, Myanmar. Dharma teachers from Myanmar continue to come and teach at the centre and the present meditation master in the centre is Ven. Sayadaw U Thuzana.

During the last twenty years or so, the country has also witnessed the spreading of the Dharma by Western monks who have been trained in the Thai forest tradition of the late Ven. Ajahn Chah Bodhinyana Mahāthera. The most prominent of these is Ven. Ajahn Brahmavamso Mahāthera, who is the abbot of Bodhinyana Monastery of Western Australia. Every year, Ven. Ajahn conducts meditation retreats and holds Dharma talks in Penang and Kuala Lumpur. Due to his vast knowledge coupled with his humour and wit, Ven. Ajahn's talks on the application of Buddhist principles to modern day living, attract large turn-outs, particularly from the well-educated, English speaking Buddhists.

The Burmese community in the country is much smaller than the Thai community and they are mainly concentrated in Penang. Hence it is not surprising that the only Burmese temple in Malaysia is located in Penang. The Dhammikarama Burmese Temple was built in 1803, with the oldest part of the temple being the stupa, consecrated in 1805. It is enshrined within an outer stupa which was constructed in 1838. Being one of the earliest and the only Burmese Temple in Malaysia, the temple was designated in 1988 as one of Penang's historical sites to be preserved as a tourist attraction. The temple is always managed by a chief monk to facilitate the practice of Buddhism. The current chief monk is Sayadaw U Pannya Vamsa, a learned scholar and author who founded the International Burmese Buddhist Sangha Organization in 1985. The temple conducts meditation classes and Dharma talks for its devotees and there is also a Sunday school.

The Burmese contribution to Malaysian Buddhism extends well beyond their only Burmese temple in Penang. Besides the MBMC, many other centres in Malaysia are now conducting regular meditation classes and retreats following the Mahasi Sayadaw form of meditation. Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw himself visited Malaysia in 1980 to give teachings and introduced vipassana meditation. Since then, other Burmese monks trained in the Mahasi Sayadaw method, have come and taught and are still teaching in Malaysia. Besides this, monks trained in the Pa Auk method of meditation also conduct regular meditation retreats in various temples and centres in Malaysia. Developed by Ven. Pa Auk Sayadaw who is the founder and main teacher of the Pa Auk Forest Monastery in southern Burma, the Pa Auk meditation method includes samatha as well as a variety of vipassana techniques.

A major contribution to the development of Theravada Buddhism in the country was made by Sinhalese monks. In the nineteenth century CE, Sinhalese immigrants came to Malaysia to work. These immigrants brought with them able religious leaders from Sri Lanka to cater to the spiritual and cultural needs of the Sinhalese Buddhist community. Some of these monks went beyond their primary duty of catering to the spiritual needs of the Sinhalese and devoted themselves to propagate the teachings of the Buddha for the greater good of the Buddhist population in general. Being English-speaking, the Sri Lankan monks were able to communicate with the English-educated population in the country. Thus today, the four Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in Malaysia cater to Buddhists of all ethnic groups, with the English-speaking Chinese forming the largest group of devotees.

The first and oldest Sinhalese temple in the country is the Bodhi Lankarama Buddhist temple in Taiping, Perak which was built in 1889 by a Sinhalese, Geris De Alwis. In 1893, a sapling from the Bodhi Tree in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, was planted in the temple and the tree still stands today in the temple grounds.[40]

The Sinhalese community founded the first registered Buddhist society in Malaysia called the Sasana Abhiwurdhi Wardhana Society, registered at the end of the nineteenth century CE. This society established the Buddhist Maha Vihara in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur in 1895. Today, the temple has a very well organised Sunday Dharma School (called the Buddhist Institute Sunday Dharma School), which can cater to 1,500 students from children to working adults. It also runs a kindergarten. There are also regular prayer services, religious talks as well as counselling sessions and meditation classes. The temple also houses an active Youth section and a Ladies section. Since 2007, the Buddhist Maha Vihara has also conducted the Diploma in Buddhism course offered by the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka. The present chief monk of the Buddhist Maha Vihara is Ven. K. Sri Dhammaratana Nayaka Maha Thera.

Much of the growth and success of the Buddhist Maha Vihara must be attributed to the late Ven. Dr K Sri Dhammananda Nayaka MahāaThera. Ven. Dhammananda was the chief monk of the Buddhist Maha Vihara from the 1950s until he passed away in 2006, and he was also the Chief Sangha Nayaka of Malaysia and Singapore. To the English-educated community in the country, Ven. Dhammananda stood out as the doyen among the sangha in Malaysia. Born in 1919 in southern Sri Lanka, he was fully ordained as a bhikkhu in 1940. For seven years from 1938, he studied Sanskrit, Pali Tipitaka, Buddhist Philiosophy and other subjects at Vidyalankara Pirivena in Kelaniya. Subsequently in 1945, he furthered his education at the Benares Hindu University in India and graduated with a Master's degree in Indian Philosophy in 1949. His years of intensive training in monastic discipline and education in Buddhist teachings proved most beneficial for his later missionary work.

In 1952, Ven. Dhammananda arrived in Malaysia and thus started his fifty-four years of illustrious Buddhist missionary work in the country. From his arrival, the he contributed greatly to Buddhism and Buddhist education in Malaysia. In 1962, he established the Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia (BMSM) at the Buddhist Maha Vihara for a more organised missionary work in the country. Ven. Dhammananda believed that one of the most effective ways to propagate Buddhism was to write books on various aspects of the Buddha's teachings which the laity could learn and practise in their daily lives.[41] Under BMSM, he wrote many booklets and books on Buddhist teachings. Through his writings, the English-educated Buddhist community in Malaysia was able to read, for the first time, about Buddhist teachings in English, as most materials on Buddhism then were written in Mandarin. Ven. Dhammannada wrote more than seventy books and booklets, many of which have been translated into no less than sixteen languages worldwide. His book titled *What Buddhists Believe*, which has undergone several editions and countless reprints and translated into many languages worldwide, introduced many Malaysians to Buddhism and is still widely accepted as the standard text for a new Buddhist in the country. Other popular books written by him included *How to Live Without Fear and Worry, A Happy Married Life, Why Religious Tolerance?* and *Whither Mankind*. Ven. Dhamananda's whole approach to the exposition of the Dharma is governed by his deep concern for giving the ancient teachings a contemporary relevance, to show that the sublime message is timeless and has a meaning that cuts across the boundaries of time, space, race, culture and even religious beliefs. He also founded the journal "Voice of Buddhism" which is still being published on a bi-annual basis by BMSM.

Ven. Dhamananda gave countless Dharma talks in Malaysia as well as many parts of the world. Through his clear and simple exposition of the Buddha-Dharma, he was able to reach out to all levels of his audience, young or old, educated or otherwise. Many of the young students who were captivated by his Dharma talks set up Buddhist societies in various institutions of higher learning during the 1960s. Upon graduation, some of these students continued their interest in Buddhism and went on to become leaders of various Buddhist societies in the country. In 1970 and 1975, Ven. Dhammanda went on a world Dharma tour, giving lectures on Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy. In Britain, he lectured at Lancaster University, Hull University, Manchester University and Oxford University; while in the United States, he gave lectures at the Dharma Realm Buddhist University and the University of Oriental Studies. For his outstanding contribution to Buddhist education, he was awarded honorary doctorates by Dharma Realm Buddhist University, University of Oriental Studies, Nalanda University, Benares Hindu University (his alma mater) and the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka.[42] This clearly shows that his contribution to Buddhism was recognized not only in Malaysia but many countries of the world.

Ven. Dhammananda was also the pioneer for the novitiate programme in Malaysia. In 1976, he initiated the novitiate programme in Malaysia for Buddhists interested in experiencing the life of a monk for a short period of time. Since then, this programme has been an annual affair. He also inspired many young monks to become missionaries. A number of his disciples are now continuing his work on Buddhism, one of whom is Ven. Mahinda.

Although ordained in the Theravada tradition, Ven. Dhammananda is open to all the Buddhist traditions, inviting teachers from the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions to teach Dharma at the Buddhist Maha Vihara. He always argued that the Buddha only taught the Dharma – he did not teach Theravada, Mahayana or Vajrayana.[43] For the great services rendered not only to the Buddhist community but also to the welfare of the nation in general, Ven. Dhammananda was awarded the title of Johan Setia Mahkota (JSM) by His Majesty the King of Malaysia in 1991.

Besides the Buddhist Maha Vihara, there is also another Sri Lankan temple in Kuala Lumpur. This is the Sri Lanka Buddhist Temple in Sentul, Kuala Lumpur (formerly known as the Sri Jayanti Buddhist Temple). Founded in the early twentieth century CE, the temple initially served as the place of worship for many of the Sinhalese railway workers in Malaysia. The arrival of the present chief incumbent, Ven. B. Sri Saranankara Nayaka Maha Thera from Sri Lanka in 1984, transformed the temple into a centre of religious practice and also a place for social and welfare activities. Today, the temple conducts regular chanting and meditation classes, and Dharma talks for its devotees. There is also a Sunday Dharma School and it also holds a novitiate programme yearly. Welfare activities conducted under associations set up by the temple include old folks home, free clinic and the provision of educational requirements to poor school children.

The Bodhi Tree in Mahindarama Buddhist Temple, Penang, which was grown from a spaling of the sacred Bodhi Tree at Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. (Photo taken by Ong Ah Chye.)

The fourth Sri Lanka temple in Malaysia is the Mahindarama Buddhist Temple in Penang. Founded by Venerable A. Pemaratana Maha Thera in 1918, the temple is currently the most active Theravada Buddhist temple in Penang. It runs a Sunday school which has about 700 students ranging from pre-school children to adults. It also conducts meditation classes, Dharma talks, novitiate programmes and annual meditation retreats. Besides spiritual development, the temple is also involved in charitable activities. It has an old folks home and a centre providing free medical, dental and eye care. It also provides counselling services to the sick and conducts regular health talks. The present chief monk of the temple is Ven. E. Indaratana Maha Thera.

Besides the Thai, Burmese and Sri Lankan monks, Malaysian monks have contributed and are contributing to the progress of Theravada Buddhism in Malaysia. One of the earliest of such monks is Ven. Sujivo, who ordained as a novice monk shortly after his graduation from the University of Malaya in 1975. Trained under several masters including Sayadaw U Pandita in Myanmar, Ven. Sujivo set up a meditation centre (Santisukharama Buddhist Centre) in Kota Tinggi, Johore. He also inspired many meditation centres to be set up in the country. However, he is mainly based in Eastern Europe currently.

The late Ven. Suvanno who founded the Buddhist Hermitage Lunas in Kedah, was another Malaysian monk who had contributed towards the development of Buddhism in Malaysia. A charismatic speaker who was fluent in English and the Chinese Hokkien dialect, Ven. Suvanno's Dharma talks drew large crowds.

Another Malaysian monk, Ven. Mahinda, who is currently the abbot of the Aloka Meditation Centre near

Sydney, founded the Aloka Foundation in 2002 to operate retreat centres in Malaysia. Ordained under the late Ven. Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda, Ven. Mahinda undertook basic Buddhist studies and training in Sri Lanka and practical Buddhist meditation under several masters in Sri Lanka, India, Burma and Thailand. He has travelled to more than thirty countries to spread the message of the Buddha. Since 1976, Ven. Mahinda has been conducting the annual Novitiate Programme at the Buddhist Maha Vihara in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur. He has also been conducting meditation retreats in Penang, Kuala Lumpur, and at Alokarama (Aloka Foundation's initial project) which is a retreat centre in Negeri Sembilan.

Another prominent Malaysian Theravada monk is Ven. Aggacitta Bhikkhu who received his higher ordination at the Mahasi Meditation Centre, Burma in 1979. Trained under various teachers, notably Sayadaw U. Pandita, Sayadaw U. Tissara, and Sayadaw U. Acinna, Ven. Aggacitta is respected for his knowledge of the Vinaya and the Buddhist scriptures. In 2000, he initiated the establishment of the Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary (SBS), a forest monastery for the proper training of Malaysian Theravada Buddhist monks near Taiping, Perak. The primary objective of SBS is to train monks regarding the theory and practice of the Vinaya, and meditation; and to evolve a Malaysian Theravada identity guided by the scriptural tradition. Currently the spiritual director of SBS, he conducts Dharma talks and meditation retreats throughout Malaysia. Ven. Aggacitta is the translator of Sayadaw U. Pandita's book *In This Very Life* published in 1993.

Vajrayana Buddhism

Vajrayana Buddhism has generally been introduced to Malaysia by Tibetan Buddhist masters of the Sutra and Tantra teachings. Compared to Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, Vajrayana Buddhism has a much shorter history in the country. While no exact date is available, Vajrayana Buddhism probably had its beginnings in the country in the 1970s. In 1971 and 1974, one of the most revered Tibetan masters of the twentieth century, the late Ven. Tulku Urgen Rinpoche visited Malaysia and introduced Tibetan Buddhist teachings to Malaysia. This was followed by the visit in 1976 of the sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa who was the spiritual leader of the Karma Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. This led to the formation of the first Vajrayana Buddhist society in the country - the Karma Kagyu Dharma Society in Kuala Lumpur.

In 1982, His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama visited Malaysia and was accorded a warm welcome by Buddhists of the Theravada, Chinese Mahayana and Tibetan Vajrayana traditions. Other Tibetan teachers also visited Malaysia, usually at the request of their devotees in the country. The most celebrated of these teachers included His Holiness the Sakya Trizin (head of the Sakya Lineage), His Holiness the Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang (head of the Drikung Kagyu Lineage), Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche (spiritual head of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition - Gelugpa), Khensur Rinpoche Jampa Yeshe (former abbot of Ganden Shartse Monastery - Gelugpa), H.E. Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche (founder of the Rangjung Yeshe Institute – Kagyu/Nyingma), H.E. Beru Khyentse Rinpoche (founder of the Khenkong Tharjay Buddhist Society - Karma Kagyu), H.E. Dungse Garab Dorje Rinpoche (founder of the Dudjom New Treasure – Nyingma), and many others.

Following the visits and talks by these Tibetan masters, many Vajrayana Buddhist societies were established by the Malaysian followers of these masters in the 1980s and 1990s. These societies included the Ka-Nying Ling Dharma Society and the Karma World Buddhist Society in Kuala Lumpur; the Dharma House Society, Losang Dragpa Buddhist Society, Sakyamuni Dharma Centre, Ratnashri Buddhist Centre and Khenkong Karma Tharjay Dharma Society in Petaling Jaya; Dzongsar Manjushri Dharma Society in Kuantan; Mindrolling Buddhist Society and Dudjom New Treasure Buddhist Society in Ipoh; and the Penang Sakya Buddhist Association in Penang. It is to be noted that societies of all the four major Tibetan schools of Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and Gelugpa have been established in Malaysia.

Due to the increase in the number of Tibetan-based Buddhist organisations and the need for a representation of the Vajrayana Buddhist community in dealing with the government and other Buddhist umbrella bodies, the Vajrayana Buddhist Council of Malaysia (VBCM) was registered in 2002. The VBCM is an umbrella body consisting of member organizations which represent all Vajrayana Buddhist traditions in Malaysia. Starting with twenty founding member organizations, the VBCM now has more than forty member organizations.

Today, Vajrayana Buddhism is growing in Malaysia. Many Tibetan Buddhist masters continue to come and spread the Dharma in Malaysia. Since the Tibetan masters are mainly English speaking, it is not surprising that the followers of Vajrayana Buddhism in Malaysia are mainly the English speaking Chinese.

The Establishment of Lay Buddhist Societies and Organisations

Associations and societies of lay people have played a very important role in sustaining and developing

Buddhism in Malaysia, not only in the traditional area of support for the temples and the sangha, but also in the study and practice of Buddhism, Dharma propagation and welfare work. These organizations are generally managed by laymen, with monks or nuns as advisers. There are hundreds of such associations and societies in Malaysia, most of them formed in the second half of the twentieth century. In the last three sub-sections, a number of the Buddhist lay societies including the Sasana Abhiwurdhi Wardhana Society, the Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia and the Vajrayana Buddhist groups have been mentioned.

The largest Buddhist lay association in the country is the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM). The YBAM was formed in 1970 to unite the Buddhist youth and to inspire them in cultivating wisdom, compassion and gratitude through Dharma propagation, education, culture and welfare. It currently has 270 Buddhist youth organizations as members, representing about 100,000 individuals.[44] The YBAM is a non-sectarian organization with its members being made up of organizations from all the Buddhist traditions. The association is recognized by the Ministry of Youth and Sports as the sole representative of Buddhist youths in Malaysia and since 1972, it has been a member organisation of the Malaysia Youth Council. The association runs many activities, ranging from Dharma talks and meditation camps to social welfare activities for its members. Since 1974, the YBAM has been conducting the annual Malaysian Buddhist Examinations (in English and Mandarin) for students of various levels, together with the Malaysian Buddhist Association. The YBAM has since 1975 been publishing the well-known Buddhist Digest (Mandarin), a quarterly magazine; and it also publishes an English journal called Eastern Horizon, three times a year. In 1979, the YBAM formed the Young Buddhist Foundation to raise and manage funds to assist the association to run welfare, cultural, training, research, educational and religious activities. This foundation also supports a Sangha Fund for monks and nuns.

Another very active non-sectarian Buddhist lay organization is the Buddhist Gem Fellowship (BGF) which started in 1980 as a graduate fellowship to tap the intellectual resources of Buddhist professionals so as to promote the growth of Buddhism. This organization emphasizes spiritual development and Dharma propagation; training and leadership development; and publication and research. The BGF has been successful in conducting intercampus Dharma and management camps for university and college students, and it also conducts programmes to train new Dharma speakers.

In recent years, the country has seen the sprouting up of many Amitabha Buddhist Societies which promotes the practice of the Pure Land school of Mahayana Buddhism. At the last count, more than thirty Amitabha Buddhist Societies have been formed throughout the country. These societies, which are run by lay persons, are mainly organization members of the Malaysian Buddhist Association. Most of the Mahayana Buddhist societies and organizations in the country are members of the Malaysian Buddhist Association.

Buddhist Education and Institutions

There are many temples in the country running Sunday Dharma Schools to impart the teachings of the Buddha to children and adults. Besides this, Malaysians of all ages interested in pursuing Buddhist education can register to study on their own and sit for the annual Malaysian Buddhist Examinations (in English and Mandarin) of various levels, jointly conducted by the Malaysian Buddhist Association and the YBAM.

In terms of formal Buddhist institutions, there are two Buddhist primary schools and two Buddhist secondary schools in the country. The two primary schools are the Phor Tay Primary School and the Siang Lin Primary School; the two Buddhist secondary schools are the Phor Tay High School and the Phor Tay Private High School. As for the Siang Lin Primary School which is located in Malacca, it was founded by the late Ven. Kim Beng. These schools follow the government school syllabus but Buddhism is taught as an additional subject after normal school hours. In other schools in Malaysia, Buddhism is not taught as a subject.

In terms of post-secondary education, there is the Malaysian Buddhist Institute in Penang which was established in 1969 under the auspices of the Malaysian Buddhist Association. While the institute mainly provides formal training for Mahayana Buddhist monks and nuns, it also allows lay-persons to follow a more in-depth study of Buddhism. Since its establishment, this institute has enrolled about 1,000 students with more than 700 students having successfully graduated from the institute.[45] About 65% of the students are sangha members, mainly from the Mahayana tradition. While there are also Theravada monks from Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand, India, etc, pursuing courses at the institute, their numbers are very small compared to the Mahayana sangha members. Apart from language courses, all courses conducted at the institute are in Mandarin. This institute has successfully groomed many young monks and nuns who subsequently returned to help in the management and operation of their respective temples not only in Malaysia but also in different parts of South-east Asia. Graduates of the institute who wish to pursue higher education have been accepted into universities in Hong Kong, Taiwan and China.

Besides this, since 2007, the Buddhist Maha Vihara in Kuala Lumpur has also been conducting the Diploma in Buddhism course offered by the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka.

Higher Buddhist education is also available in the country. Although the International Buddhist College (IBC) is located in Thailand, the M.A. and PhD programmes are available for students in Malaysia. Courses for the M.A. programme in Buddhist Studies are conducted at the Than Hsiang Temple in Penang, and at Tham Wah Wan Temple in Kuala Lumpur. Visiting professors and lecturers from IBC come to teach the subjects at the two temples in Malaysia. For those who are unable to attend the courses at the two locations, the E-Learning M.A. in Buddhist Studies programme is also available.

Malaysian Buddhist Contribution to Society

The many Buddhist temples and organizations in the country are not only involved in religious activities. These temples and organizations are also involved in other activities which bring direct benefits to society. The areas in which Malaysian Buddhists have made significant contribution are education, culture and social welfare work.

Besides the provision of Buddhist studies, the Malaysian Buddhist contribution towards the field of education can also be seen in the establishment of the Penang Buddhist Free School by Venerable Guang Yu and his Dharma brother, Ven. Guang Yi in the late 1960s. Set up to provide education for people who lost the opportunity to complete their education when they were young, the rationale was to run an evening school so that these people can continue to improve themselves even after working. Today, the school continues to provide education to people of all ages, races and religions for a nominal fee of RM1. To meet the needs of the changing environment, practical courses like computer, photography, language (Chinese, English, Malay, Thai, Japanese), painting, etc. are now offered. In the field of pre-school education, a number of Buddhist temples and organizations are also running kindergartens. Examples include the Penang Buddhist Association, the Than Hsiang organization, the Buddhist Maha Vihara in Kuala Lumpur, Siang Lin Chiao Yuan in Malacca, etc. Many Buddhist temples and organizations also provide scholarships to needy students. The most well-known is the Kwan Inn Teng Temple in Petaling Jaya which provides scholarships amounting to hundreds of thousands annually.

In the field of culture, two Mahayana Buddhist monks are acknowledged as masters of Chinese painting and calligraphy. These two monks were the late Ven. Chuk Mor and the late Ven. Bo-Yuen. Both the monks had held successful exhibitions and their works are still much sought after by collectors. Various Buddhist organizations also hold seminars on culture, writing competitions, and arts and photography exhibitions. In 2007, a Buddhist Culture & Arts Festival was held which involved fifty Buddhist societies in Malaysia representing the three Buddhist traditions. The Dong Zen Temple in Selangor has also developed into an important cultural centre with various cultural festivals and exhibitions being held regularly.

It is in the field of social welfare work that Malaysian Buddhist contribution to society is probably the most outstanding. Many Buddhist temples and organizations in the country run old folks homes and/or orphanages/children's homes. The oldest Buddhist orphanage in the country is the Penang Phor Tay orphanage. The Ti-Ratana Welfare Society founded in 1994 by Ven. K. Sri Dhammaratana, the currrent chief monk of the Buddhist Maha Vihara, now runs three orphanages/children's homes and two old folks homes caring for 250 children and fifty senior citizens in the country. The Than Hsiang organization currently operates four senior citizens homes in Penang, Kedah and Kuala Lumpur. Other Buddhist organizations running old folks or senior citizens homes include the Penang Buddhist Association, the Malaysian Buddhist Association, the Mahindarama Buddhist Temple, Sri Jayanti Metta Home, Maha Karuna Compassionate Home, etc.

Caring for the sick is another contribution which Malaysian Buddhists are proud of. Many Buddhist organizations in Malaysia run free clinics providing medical care (either Western medicine or Chinese medicine and acupuncture) to needy Malaysians. Besides this, a number of Buddhist organizations have also started haemodialysis centres for patients with kidney disease. One of the most well-known is the Sau Seng Lum organization started in 1994 by Ven. Chang Heng, the present abbess of Sau Seng Lum Chinese Buddhist Temple in Petaling Jaya. This organization now has four centres providing haemodialysis services, stroke rehabilitation and diabetes care to the sick. Other Buddhist organizations providing haemodialysis services in Malaysia include the Buddhist Tzu Chi Merit Society, the Penang Fo Yi Haemodialysis Society, etc. Buddhist contribution in caring for the sick has also extended to hospice work. The only in-patient hospice in Malaysia currently, the Pure Lotus Hospice of Compassion, was started by a Mahayana nun, Ven. Chueh Lyan, in 2001. Since then, the hospice has provided palliative care for more than 600 end-stage cancer patients. Another Buddhist Hospice in Malaysia, Kasih Hospice, provides care and counselling to patients wishing to remain at home while living with life threatening illnesses.

Other than the above, many Buddhist temples and organizations in Malaysia also distribute financial aid and material requisites to the poor, sick and needy annually. Another Buddhist contribution is in the area of disaster relief. A number of Buddhist organizations also help in collecting aid for disaster relief, not only for victims in the country (for example, the recent floods in Malaysia), but also for victims in other countries (for example, the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka, 2008 cyclone in Myanmar, 2008 Sichuan earthquake, etc). The most prominent Buddhist group involved in disaster relief is the Buddhist Tzu Chi Merit Society.

Current State of Buddhism in Malaysia

Buddhism has made a lot of progress in the country. From a small number of Buddhist monks 100 years ago, there are now more than 1,000 Buddhist monks and nuns in the country. Since the middle of the twentieth century, the number of Buddhist establishments has also grown greatly such that there are now more than 800 Buddhist temples, centres, societies and organizations in the country.

Due to the efforts put in by the Buddhist sangha members, as well as the activities carried out by the Buddhist temples and organizations of the three major traditions, many Malaysians are now acquainted with the teachings of the Buddha. The teachings of the Buddha are now easily available in the country – one can listen to the Dharma talks conducted at the many temples and centres, or one can stay quietly at home and read the many Dharma books or listen to the CDs or watch the VCDs which are printed for free distribution, or one can listen or view the Dharma talks over the internet. In the same way, one can go for chanting at the many Thai, Burmese, Sri Lankan, Mahayana or Vajrayana Buddhist temples/centres in the country, or practise meditation following the Mahasi Sayadaw method, the Pa Auk method, the Thai forest tradition or Chan meditation at the various temples and centres. Due to the fact that all three major traditions are thriving in the country, many Malaysian Buddhists do not follow just one particular Buddhist tradition. While they may stay rooted in a particular tradition as a base, they may also take part in a religious activity of another tradition. This embracing of the three major traditions is a unique feature of Malaysian Buddhism.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the population in Malaysia by religion in 1991 and 2000. The figures are extracted from the 1991 and 2000 Population and Housing Census of Malaysia carried out by the Department of Statistics. Although a Population and Housing Census was also conducted in 2010, data on demographic characteristics is not yet available at the time of writing.

Due to various factors, the figures shown in the table are to be interpreted with care. Firstly, the census included foreigners who had stayed or intended to stay in Malaysia for six months or more in 2000. Thus, the population figures included non-Malaysian citizens who formed a significant 5.9% of the population in 2000. Since the non-Malaysian citizens comprise mainly foreign workers, out of whom the Indonesians, who mainly practise Islam, are the majority, the percentage of Buddhists as a proportion of total population may have been affected. Secondly, the majority of the Chinese in Malaysia practise a religion which is a synthesis of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and traditional beliefs. This majority group of mixed Buddhists would have labelled themselves as Buddhists. At the same time, there is also a minority Chinese group who may just be following Taoism or Confucianism only. Although there is a category called "Confucianism, Taoism, other traditional Chinese religion" in the census, this group of people may also label themselves as Buddhists due to bureaucratic convenience. Hence, due to these factors, the figures shown in Table 1 are just to be taken as a very rough indication of the Buddhist population in the country.

Table 1: Malaysia – Distribution of Total Population by Religion for 1991 & 2000

		1991		2000		1991-2000
		Number	% of population	Number	% of population	Average Growth per annum
1	Islam	10,257,341	58.6%	14,049,379	60.4%	3.2%
2	Christianity	1,412,180	8.1%	2,126,190	9.1%	4.2%
3	Hinduism	1,112,260	6.4%	1,457,907	6.3%	2.7%
4	Buddhism	3,222,045	18.4%	4,467,497	19.2%	3.3%
5	Confucianism, Taoism, other traditional Chinese religion	927,968	5.3%	615,076	2.6%	-4.0%
6	Tribal/folk religion	205,985	1.2%	195,828	0.8%	-0.5%
7	Others	82,597	0.5%	88,429	0.4%	0.7%
8	No religion	253,470	1.4%	194,369	0.8%	-2.6%
9	Unknown	24,245	0.1%	80,015	0.3%	12.7%
	Total Population	**17,498,091**	**100.0%**	**23,274,690**	**100.0%**	**2.9%**

(Source: 1991 and 2000 Population and Housing Census Reports of Malaysia, Department of Statistics Malaysia).

From the table it can be seen that 4.47 million people were classified as Buddhists in the country, forming 19.2% of the total population of the country in 2000. Thus Buddhism is the second largest religion in the country after Islam, which is followed by 60.4% of the population. The Chinese form the majority of the Buddhists in Malaysia, accounting for 96.8% of the total Buddhist population in the country in 2000.[46]

It can be seen, too, that the number of Buddhists in the country had risen from 3.22 million in 1991 to 4.47 million in 2000, representing an average annual growth rate of 3.3% per annum. The percentage of population adhering to Buddhism had also increased from 18.4% in 1991 to 19.2% in 2000. However, as stated previously, due to various factors the figures are to be taken as a very rough indication of the Buddhist population in the country.

Challenges Facing Buddhism in Malaysia

Although Islam is the official religion of the country, the right of every Malaysian to practise his/her own religion is enshrined in Article 11 of the Constitution of Malaysia. Against such a background of religious freedom and in spite of problems relating to the allocation of land for places of worship, Buddhism in Malaysia has made tremendous progress. The Buddhist community is represented on the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism which holds dialogues with the government on various matters pertaining to religion. In the twenty-first century, new challenges have emerged and two of the challenges facing Buddhism in Malaysia today are highlighted below.

One of the challenges facing Buddhism (as well as other religions) in Malaysia are the changes in values brought on by modernization and globalization. Due to modernization, the pursuit of money is now seen as more important than spirituality. Unless some disaster or grave illness befalls a person or their family members, many Malaysians do not bother about religion. Similarly, due to the effects of globalization, the Malaysian society is turning into a consumerist society. When new gadgets are introduced, for example Apple's iPad, Malaysians queue up to purchase them. The Malaysian society is also becoming very brand-conscious, always wanting to acquire the latest popular or "in" brands for their clothes, shoes, etc. Due to this obsession with material goods, spirituality is seen as less important. Many Malaysians only go to the temples to pray to gain personal monetary benefits.

Another challenge facing Buddhism is how to attract young people to participate in religious activities. While the many Sunday schools in the country have been very successful in instilling Buddhist values in the young children, the problem is how to get the youths above twelve years of age to be interested in Buddhism. These youths are easily bored and find no relevance in the religious activities carried out.

Ways to counter the above include emphasising the applicability of Buddhism to everyday modern life, as well as to be more aggressive and innovative in delivery methods and channels to propagate Buddhist teachings. While efforts such as Buddhist hymns, content delivery via the internet, CDs and VCDs, etc have helped some of the younger Malaysians to be interested in Buddhism, more still needs to be done.

Conclusion

Buddhism has made a lot of progress in Malaysia since the nineteenth century CE when Buddhism was re-introduced into the country. Due to the efforts of sangha members as well as the many Buddhist organizations which were largely set up in the second half of the twentieth century, all three major Buddhist traditions of Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana are flourishing and existing harmoniously in the country today. Buddhism in Malaysia is truly a showcase of unity in diversity. While a lot of work has been put in, more intensive and innovative efforts are still needed to take Buddhism to the next level in the twenty-first century. In a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious society like Malaysia, Buddhist teachings which promote peace, harmony, tolerance and mutual respect for one another, is very important and relevant.

Notes

1 All statistics shown in this paragraph are based on the 2000 Population and Housing Census of Malaysia carried out by the Department of Statistics, Malaysia. Although a Population and Housing Census was also conducted in 2010, data on demographic characteristics is not available at the time of writing.

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3 P. V. Bapat, ed., *2,500 Years of Buddhism* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1956), p.76.

4 Wheatley, p.182.

5 G. Coedes, *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*, ed. Walter F. Vella, trans. Sue Brown Cowing (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968), p.18.

6 Himanshu Bhatt, "Bujang Valley continues to amaze historians." www.thesundaily.com/article.cfm?id=49019 Accessed: Jan. 29, 2011

7 John Miksic, "From Prehistory to Protohistory", in *The Encyclopedia of Malaysia: Volume 4 Early History*, ed. Nik Hassan Shuhaimi Nik Abdul Rahman (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 1998), p.64.

8 D.G.E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, 4th ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), p.37.

9 John Miksic, "From Prehistory to Protohistory", p.64.

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Ibid.*

12 Nik Hassan Shuhaimi Nik Abdul Rahman, "Religious Sculpture", in *The Encyclopedia of Malaysia: Volume 4 Early History*, p.96.

13 *Ibid.*, pp.96-97.

14 *Ibid.*, p.96.

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*, p.97.

17 *Ibid.*, p.96.

18 Ipoi Datan, "Santubong", *The Encyclopedia of Malaysia: Volume 4 Early History*, p.113.

19 John Miksic, "Trade Routes and Trade Centres", *The Encyclopedia of Malaysia: Volume 4 Early History*, p.79.

20 *Ibid.*

21 Nik Hassan Shuhaimi Nik Abdul Rahman, "Chi tu: An inland kingdom", *The Encyclopedia of Malaysia: Volume 4 Early History*, p.68.

22 *Ibid.*

23 Wheatley, p.50.

24 John Miksic, "Chinese Traders and Pilgrims", *The Encyclopedia of Malaysia: Volume 4 Early History*, p.83.

25 Wheatley, p.49.

26 Hall, p.48.

27 *Ibid.*

28 John Miksic, "Chinese Traders and Pilgrims", p.83.

29 Nik Hassan Shuhaimi Nik Abdul Rahman, "Srivijaya", *The Encyclopedia of Malaysia: Volume 4 Early History*, p.118.

30 Hall, p.67.

31 Nik Hassan Shuhaimi Nik Abdul Rahman, "Religious Sculpture", p.97.

32 Nicholas Tarling, ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia Volume One: From early times to c,1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.330.

33 Yeap Tor Hor and Kerry Trembath, "Buddhism in Malaysia."www.quangduc.com/English/WorldBuddhism/14malai.html Accessed: 20 July 2010.20 July 2010.

34 *Ibid.*

35 *Ibid.*

36 Leong Kok Hing, "Dharma Master Zhu Mo & Buddhism in Malaysia", in *Autobiographical Notes of Dharma Master Zhu Mo*, ed. Chi Chern (Penang: Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia, 1984), p.72.

37 Data obtained from the Malaysian Buddhist Association, January 2011.

38 Yeap and Trembath.

39 *Ibid.*

40 E. Indaratana, C. Witanachchi, and L. Lim, eds., *Mahindarama Buddhist Temple: 85 Years of History (1918-2003)* (Penang: Mahindarama Dhamma Publication, 2004), p.18.

41 Benny Liow Woon Khin, "Venerable Dr. K.Sri Dhammananda Mahā Nayaka Thera: A Brief Introduction on His Life and Contributions to Malaysian Buddhism." www.quangduc.com/English/VENDhammanandahtm.htm Accessed: 19 February 2011.February 2011.

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Ibid.*

44 Data obtained from the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia, March 2011.

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46 Malaysia, Department of Statistics, *2000 Population and Housing Census of Malaysia: Population Distribution and Basic Demographic Characteristics* (Malaysia: Department of Statistics, 2001).

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ESSAY 15

Buddhism in Singapore

Hue Guan Thye[1]

Introduction

Singapore's total population was 5.08 million as at end-June 2010. There were 3.77 million Singapore residents and 1.31 million non-resident foreigners. The Chinese formed 74 per cent of the resident population; the Malay and Indian share stood at 13 per cent and 9.2 per cent respectively.[2] The number of Singaporeans who identified Buddhism as their religious affiliation, has significantly increased from 27 per cent and 31.2 percent between 1980 and 1990, respectively, to 42.5 percent in 2000.[3] However, ten years later, Buddhists accounted for only 33.3 per cent of the resident population.[4] This was the religion's first dip in the past thirty years, even though Buddhism is still considered the major religion in this multi-racial country.

Buddhism in Singapore comprises different canonical Buddhist traditions; for instance, Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana coexist and interact with one another. Instead of fully reflecting the theology of their canonical traditions in the institutions and practice of Buddhism in Singapore, most of the Buddhist temples and organizations follow a pattern based on the nationality of the founding monk or laity. Hence, the diverse origins of Buddhism in Singapore can be distinguished in the following national styles: China, Taiwan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Tibet. The corresponding canonical Buddhist traditions in Singapore and their countries of origin are as follows:

- Mahayana: Chinese from China and Taiwan, etc.
- Theravada: Sinhalese, Thai and Burmese from Sri Lanka, Thailand and Burma, etc.
- Vajrayana: Tibetan from Tibet, India and Nepal, etc.

Mahayana Buddhism in Singapore

The majority of Singapore Chinese immigrants were from southern China. They belonged to different dialect groups, such as Hokkiens, Teochews, Cantonese, Hakkas, Hainanese, Hockchias, Foochows, Henghuas, Shanghainese, etc. Since the early nineteenth century, each dialect group has set up their own associations and temples along the bank of the Singapore River. Generally, the religion brought by the Chinese immigrants was syncretic in nature - a mixture of Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. For instance, Hokkien temple Thian Hock Keng in Telok Ayer Street has as its patron deity the Goddess of the Sea (Ma-Cho). The main deity of Hakka temple Hock Teck See at Palmer Road is the Great Uncle (Da-Bo-Gong). Teochew temple Yue Hai Qing Miao at Phillips Street has two main deities - God of the North Pole (Xuan-Tian Shang Di) and Goddess of the Sea (Ma-Cho).

All these syncretic Chinese temples had close connections with clan associations. Hence, they were not only places for worship, but also places for clan-leaders' meetings and settlement of disputes. Although these temples also worshipped Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (Guan-yin Pu-sa) and Kshitgarbha (Di-zang Pu-sa), these partial Buddhist elements just show that such early Chinese temples are syncretic in nature: no concrete evidence can prove that they were Mahayana Buddhist temples.

Arrival of Chinese Mahayana Monks

The earliest record of a Buddhist monk in Singapore is to be found in a wooden tablet at Hang Sun Teng - a syncretic Chinese temple as well. Engraved on this tablet in 1836 are temple rules laid down by the management committee. The tablet indicates that the resident monk of the temple should, once every month, collect donations from Chinese, Siamese and Annamese sailing ships and boats to meet the expenses of the temple's incense and candle offerings. If ship owners refused to contribute their donation, any seaman from their ships who passed away would not be allowed to be buried in the temple's cemetery grounds.[5] This inscription reflects that the monk from the temple was not a teaching monk; his main duties were only to take care of the incense (income) of the temple and the cemetery, and had nothing to do with the propagation of the Dharma in this British colonial island.

Until the early twentieth century, several monks from China visited Singapore for various reasons. The Ven. Xian-hui and Ven. Xing-hui were in transit while returning from their pilgrimage to the Buddhist countries of Ceylon and India. The Ven. Tai-xu was in transit on his lecture tour to Europe and Ceylon. The Ven. Yuan-ying and Ven. Ci-hang were invited to Singapore to give Dharma lectures to the general public. The Ven. Zhuan-dao came to raise funds for the construction of college for the Sangha in China. The spread of canonical Buddhism depended on these few monks from China who were able to teach Dharma, especially the Ven. Zhuan-dao.

The Ven. Zhuan-dao (1875-1943) was born in Lam Ann, in Fukien Province, China. He was ordained at the age of twenty and first came to Singapore in 1912 to collect contributions to build a college for Sangha training at Nam Putao Monastery in Xiamen. While in Singapore, he built the Phor Toh See in Yan Kit Road on a land donated by a lay Buddhist. In 1921 he returned to Singapore to give Dharma lectures. With a donation of land and financial support by another lay Buddhist, he built the Phor Kark See at Bright Hill, which was able to provide accommodation for visiting monks from China. Five years later, he helped organize the first lay Chinese Buddhist organization, the Chinese Buddhist Association in Singapore. In 1934 he helped organize the Singapore Buddhist Lodge with Mr Lee Choon Seng (1888-1966) and other lay followers.[6] All these Buddhist temples and organizations belonged to authentic canonical Mahayana Buddhism and were the pioneers of Singapore Mahayana Buddhism. Ven. Zhuan-dao passed away at the age of seventy-two. He laid a firm foundation for Mahayana Buddhism in Singapore.

Chinese Mahayana Monasteries

According to the field research released in mid-2010, the number of canonical Mahayana temples in Singapore is less than 80.[7] However, this information is difficult to ascertain and may not be agreed upon by other researchers or religious specialists because of the vague character of Singapore Chinese temples. It is relatively easy to recognize a Theravada temple in Singapore by its architectural and iconographical features. However, it is not straightforward to differentiate a canonical Mahayana temple from a Chinese temple with Buddhist elements in this multi-religious society. Some of the Mahayana temples which are today recognized by the Mahayana Sangha were, in fact, originally built as Chinese syncretic temples and only converted into Mahayana temples recently.

Nevertheless, if we simply exclude the syncretic elements, the earliest Chinese Buddhist monastery in Singapore is the Shuanglin Monastery (Picture 1). The construction began in 1898 and completed in 1909. The building of this monastery was due to the effort of Mr Low Kim Pong (1837-1909). Mr Low, who came from Amoy, China, arrived in Singapore in 1858. He started off as a general trader and later became rich and successful by owning a Chinese druggist store and private banking business. He was on the Committee of the Chinese Advisory Board, the Po Leung Kuk and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce.[8] According to an official record at Xi-chan Monastery, China, both Mr Low and his son had an unusual dream of a "golden ma" coming from the West during 1898. It so happened that at that time, a Mahayana monk, the Ven. Xian-hui, was in transit in Singapore on his return trip to China having spent six years on a pilgrimage to Ceylon. Mr Low felt that the golden man in his dream must be the Ven. Xian-hui and requested him to stay in Singapore. The Ven. Xianhui accepted his invitation. So he donated fifteen acres of land to build a Buddhist monastery, namely Shuanglin Monastery, which was modelled after a Xi-chan monastery in Fuzhou. All the building materials were imported from Fukien province. The Ven. Xianhui died in 1901, and Mr Low died in 1909 before the monastery's opening ceremony.

Shuanglin Monastery

The largest Chinese Buddhist monastery in Singapore is the Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery This monastery, founded in 1921 by the Ven. Zhuan-dao, was meant to be a place for practice, to propagate the Dharma, and to provide lodging for monks (many who came to Singapore from China did not have lodging at that time). It was built in a rubber plantation at Bright Hill and became the first traditional Chinese forest monastery in Singapore. With the efforts of the successor abbots, the Ven. Hong-Choon and the Ven. Kwang Sheng, Phor Kark See has grown dynamically with the changing world in its Dharma propagation efforts.[9] In order to be a model international Buddhist hub, the Buddhist College of Singapore (BCS) was founded by the monastery in 2005 and the first students were enrolled in August 2006. It is the first educational institution for Sangha members in Singapore. The founding purpose of BCS is to contribute to the continual development of Chinese Buddhism and its spread in the English-speaking world by providing the necessary human resources through education. This is accomplished by nurturing the students to be effectively bilingual in English and Mandarin, grounded in right view and knowledge, while possessing the ability to engage in promulgation and academic research.[10]

Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery

Under the law enforced by the Registrar of Society after the country's independence in 1965, the Mahayana monasteries or temples in Singapore are managed by their registered management committees and administer the temples independently, based on their own constitution. However, there still remain certain loose networks between different temples via semi-secular Buddhist organizations. Examples are the Singapore Buddhist Federation, Chinese Buddhist Association, Buddhist Union and Buddhist Free Clinic. Generally, the membership of these organizations includes temples, Sangha and laity.

Chinese Laity and Lay Buddhist Organizations

During the 1940s, some Chinese leaders played their part in promoting Mahayana Buddhism in Singapore, such as Lee Choon Seng, Zhuang Du-ming and Khoo Seok-wan. Among the laity, one person, Mr Lee Choon Seng (1888-1966), deserves mention. He was born in Ying-choon, Fukien. He left China as a young man to join his father in Negri Sembilan, Malaya. Later, he left for Singapore to set up his own business. He was also a key director of OCBC bank and one of the leaders in the Chinese community of Singapore from the 1930s to 1960s. He was not only actively involved in propagating Mahayana Buddhism but also helped to found the Singapore Buddhist Lodge and Singapore Buddhist Federation.[11]

The Singapore Buddhist Lodge (SBL) (Picture 3) was set up in 1934 as a result of the effort of the Ven. Zhuan-dao, the Ven. Swee Teng, Mr Lee Choon Seng, Mr Khoo Seok-wan, Mr Zhuang Du-ming, and others. Initially, they set up a scripture circulation centre in order to circulate Chinese Mahayana scriptures in Singapore. The Lian Serh Sutra Chanting Society was eventually formed due to this centre. This society developed into the SBL in 1934. At the beginning, SBL did not have a fixed address. Subsequently, Mr Lee Choon Seng donated a double-storey house at 26 Blair Road to SBL for its use. He also contributed some furniture and other expense totalling $1,000. With the generous financial support from Mr Lee, SBL had a membership of over a hundred, most of them from the Chinese social elite. Besides promoting the Mahayana sutras, they also carried out welfare activities like providing financial support to the poor and elderly.[12] Today, SBL is the largest and most organized lay Buddhist organization in Singapore.

The Singapore Buddhist Lodge

The Singapore Buddhist Federation (SBF) is the umbrella Buddhist organization that can represent all Buddhist temples and monasteries in Singapore. On July 31, 1949, Mr Lee Choon Seng took the initiative to invite representatives from all Chinese temples to SBL to discuss the formation of a national Buddhist organization. A preparatory committee was set up to work out the details after all representatives showed their support. On October 30, 1949, the SBF was officially registered and Mr Lee Choon Seng elected chairman. The five specific guiding objectives of SBF were to promote world peace and the Dharma; to expand Buddhist education; to carry out welfare services; and to raise the quality of Sangha members.

In its first few years, SBF took over the management of the Maha Bodhi School in 1950. Due to its excellent academic results, the school eventually became government-aided. A few years later, SBF set up a 110-acre Buddhist cemetery at Chua Chu Kang Road. In 1955, SBF and the representatives of Theravada Buddhist institutions managed to convince the government to have Vesak Day gazetted as a public holiday in Singapore. These three significant achievements took place during Mr Lee Choon Seng's term as chairperson.[13] After Mr Lee stepped down in 1964, the abbot of Phor Kark See Monastery, the Ven. Hong Choon, succeeded him as chairman. The chairman of SBF today is also the abbot of Phor Kark See Monastery, the Ven. Kwang Sheng.

Theravada Buddhism in Singapore

In general, since the 1930s, Theravada Buddhism has become more organized and the Dharma more accessible to the Straits Chinese, the Sinhalese, Siamese and Burmese communities in Singapore.

Thai Sangha and Temples

Among the Theravada temples in Singapore, the most numerous are Thai Buddhist temples. There are at least six famous Thai temples in this island. Also, hundreds of Thai shops selling Thai Buddhist talismans and pendants can be found in every corner of this country.

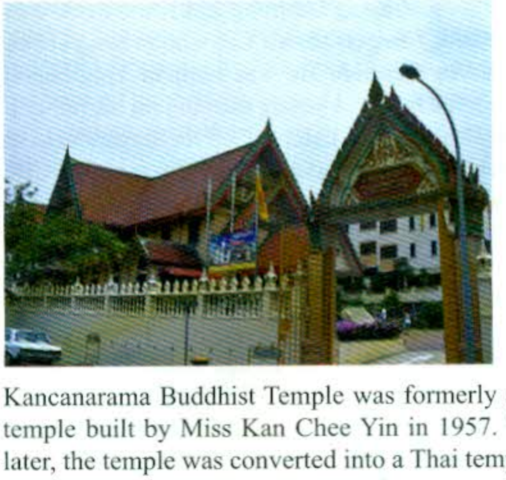
However, there is no substantial Thai community in Singapore. Hence, even though the Thai temples are manned by Thai monks, these temples cater mainly to the Chinese worshippers, which form the major ethnic group in Singapore. To make the situation more complicated, the majority of "Thai Buddhists" usually claim that besides worshipping the Lord Buddha, they also worship other Chinese gods such as the Warrior God and Monkey God in other Chinese temples, or that they are also supporters of other Mahayana monasteries. Thus Thai Theravada Buddhism does not exist in Singapore in a pure form.

The oldest Thai temple in Singapore is Wat Ananada Metyarama, (Picture 4). located in Jalan Bukit Merah and completed in 1925. The founder was the Ven. Luang Phor Hong Dhammaratano (Phra Dhammaratano Bandit) who came to Singapore in 1920 with his disciple, Samanera Boonier. Seeing that there were no Theravada temples in Singapore at that time, they aspired to build one. The Ven. Luang Phor Hong died in 1952 and was cremated by the Thai Consul General Phraya Srisayamcit together with Thai Groups. The current Chief Abbot, the Ven. Chao Khun Phra Tepsiddhivides, is also one of the Buddhists religious leaders involved in the Inter-religious Organisation (IRO), a society that promotes religious understanding and harmony in Singapore. In 1975, he renovated the temple and in 1979 constructed the pagoda and a three-storey residential block for the monks. The pagoda was officially declared open by HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, the second daughter of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, in 1985. On February 23, 1986, the laying of the Holy Stones foundation (*Nimitta Sima*) was conducted. After this ceremony was completed, Wat Ananda Metyarama was vested with the authority to ordain monks. The construction of a three-storey extension to house the library, Dhamma classrooms and Meditation Hall, began in 1995 and completed a year later. In 1995, he also constructed a golden Kwan Yin Shrine and a new porch beside the main shrine.

Other than the Ananda Metyarama Temple, which was partly sponsored by the Thai government, all the following Thai temples in Singapore were built by the monks or laities with various reasons and backgrounds.

Sakyamuni Gaya Temple was built by the Ven. Vuthissara in 1927. The fifty-foot high huge Buddha statue (Picture 5) inside the temple hall and the reclining Buddha inside the hollow chamber were the founder's own hand-work. The Ven. Vuthissara conducted rites of worship and explained Buddhist philosophy to interested visitors until his death at the age of ninety-four.

Wat Palelai is the only Thai temple in Singapore that has developed a system of "Head Temple" and "Branch Temple". The Head Temple was founded in 1963 by Madam Mary Yap in a small house located at Jalan Nipah and occupied an area of only six metres by twelve metres. However, this was sufficient to house three Thai bhikkhus and samaneras. The Ven. Phrakru Prakassa Dhammakhun (fondly known as Luang Phor) was the chief abbot and conducted the study and learning of the Dharma in the Thai tradition. Sunday school as well as Dharma talks were conducted regularly at the temple. The Branch Temple at Bedok Walk was completed in 1973. It was mooted in 1968: a wealthy Singaporean, Mr Wee Thiam Siew, who was a Buddhist, sold his plot of land to the Ven. Phrakru Prakassa Dhammakhun at half the original price. The purchase of the land was funded by voluntary contribution from Thai, Malaysian, and Singaporean Buddhists. It is bigger and more magnificent in design. On the upper level hall, there is a large Buddha statue seated on a rock with an elephant and a monkey presenting gifts to him during the period called Palelai. It is from this that the name of the temple is derived.[14]



Wat Palelai

Kancanarama Buddhist Temple was formerly a Chinese temple built by Miss Kan Chee Yin in 1957. Ten years later, the temple was converted into a Thai temple. Some resident monks reside at the there.[15]

Sattha Puchaniyaram Buddhist Temple was first located at Holland Road in 1963. When the Ven. Phraku

Kancanarama Buddhist Temple

Saddhanukul Foo Hong Kim, a Chinese Singaporean, took over the temple, the building was in a dilapidated state.. In 1957, he received his ordination at Alor Star, Kedah, Malaysia from the Ven. Chow Khun Nikrodhammathada, the former Controller of Thai monks. Soon after he returned to Singapore from his Buddhist studies at Penang and Bangkok, he rebuilt the Holland temple and renamed it Sattha Puchaniyaram Buddhist Temple. The large Mahanaga Buddha statue (Picture 8) inside the temple hall was constructed in Cambodia. In 1981, the Crown Prince of Cambodia, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, visited the temple and offered his prayers. In 1984, the temple was relocated to the present site (in Bukit Batok) due to a road enlargement project.[16]

Large Mahanaga Buddha Statue at Sattha Puchaniyaram Buddhist Temple

Wat Uttamayanmuni Thai Buddhist Temple is closely affiliated with the Kelantanese Thai monastic chapter in Malaysia. It began with Jao Khun Wijaranyanmuni (Jao Khun Khron 1876-1962), the abbot of Wat Uttamaram in the village of Bang Saet, Pasir Mas, Kelantan. In 1962, Jao Khun Khron was invited to visit Singapore by his devotees here. Mr Tan Khe Wat, a Singaporean Chinese offered a piece of land 2.5 ha in size to him for building a Thai temple in Singapore. Construction began in 1963 under the directorship of the Phra Khru Silakhunaphorn (Than Mitr 1930-2001) who at the time held the monastic title of Phra Palad. He had been given full rights to the land by Jao Khun Wijarayanmuni Jantr (1909-1992), Jao Khun Khron's successor and Kelantan's second Jao Khun. Jao Khun Jantr instructed Phra Palad Mitr to be the chief abbot of the Singapore temple and to oversee its completion. The temple's name was derived from a combination of Wat Uttamaram and Phra Wijarayanmuni (the monastic name of Kelantan first Jao Khun).

Wat Uttamayanmuni Thai Buddhist Temple

The Sinhalese Sangha, Temple and Organizations

The Sinhalese community in Singapore comprised a small group during the early twentieth century. Most of the Sinhalese were railway workers and helped build the Keppel Railway Station in the 1930s. Hence, compared to nearly a hundred Chinese Mahayana temples established islandwide, there are only two Sinhalese temples in present-day Singapore, namely Sri Lankaramaya and Mangala Vihara. However, there was a small Sinhalese temple located at Outram Road that catered to the Sinhalese workers of Keppel Railway Station during the 1930s before the establishment of Sri Lankaramaya.

The first Sinhalese Buddhist organization is the Singapore Buddhist Association (SBA). It was formed in 1923 and had a Sinhalese temple under its management in 1939. SBA and the Outram Road Temple were set up by the prominent Ceylonese monk the Ven. MM Mahaweera Maha Nayaka Thero (1913-2002), born in Maliduwa, Sri Lanka. He was ordained as a novice monk at the age of twelve and left his homeland in 1929 for Malaya. He received his higher ordination in southern Thailand and came to Singapore in 1934 to tend to the spiritual needs of the Ceylonese workers in Singapore. He took up temporary residence in Wilkie Road, near the Keppel Railway Station, and set up the Singapore Buddhist Temple and a Sakya Muni School at a rented three-storey building at 5 Sportiswoode Park. In 1939, he bought the land at 96 Outram Road and built the new temple there. He started a Sunday Dharma School and organized the Pali Section of the SBA. Many English educated Chinese, especially the Peranakans, were attracted to the Outram Road Temple.[17] Hence, this temple was getting too small and a bigger temple was urgently needed. The Ven. Mahaweera then collected donations to build the Sri Lankaramaya at St Michael's Road. After the completion of the new temple, the Outram Road temple premises were rented out for commercial use and closed a chapter on the history of this small but significant temple.[18]

Sri Lankaramaya at St Michael's Road was constructed for the Sri Lankan immigrant population in Singapore. The temple was built in 1952 and the Ven. Mahaweera was responsible for the temple's existence. It primarily attends to the needs of Sinhalese Buddhists in Singapore. It is also the oldest Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhist temple in present-day Singapore. With a stupa, a Bodhi tree, Buddha images, and a Sima Hall, the temple is considered as a complete monastery under the Theravada tradition. After the Ven. Mahaweera left the Sri Lankaramaya, the Ven. A. Chandrasiri Maha Thera took over as resident monk in 1960. In mid-1961, the Ven. Ananda Mangala arrived in Singapore and resided at this temple. During his stay, he organized the first Buddhist Youth Seminar and the first Buddhist Youth Holiday Camp in Singapore. Sri Lankaramaya today has a Sunday Dharma School which runs a kindergarten, preliminary, junior and senior Dharma classes preparing students for the Colombo YMBA Dhamma Examination. Since its foundation, many Sri Lankan monks have come to serve in the Temple.[19]

Sri Lankaramaya

Compared to Sri Lankaramaya, the Mangala Vihara attends primarily to the needs of the Baba and English-educated Chinese community. This temple was also founded by the Ven. MM Mahaweera Maha Nayaka Thero and built on its current location (Eunos Road), donated by the late Madam Chew Quee Neo in 1959. A two-storey building was completed in March 1960. With the founder's foresight on the benefits of education, he set up the Sunday Dharma School (SDS) in 1960. The SDS used the syllabi set by the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) of Colombo, Sri Lanka. He was the Dhamma School's first teacher and running five classes with the help of two teachers. When Mangala Vihara began, it did not have a chapter house; hence Mangala Vihara was not a fully-fledged Theravada temple. In 1966, the foundation stones were laid for the construction of the chapter house in the consecration ceremony headed by the Ven. K Sri Dhammananda Maha Nayaka Thero, Chief Monk of the Federation of Malaysia. This ceremony was witnessed by a large congregation of both members and devotees. The opening of the chapter house coincided with Kathina in November 1966. It was also on this day that the Ven. P Pemaratana Maha Thero from Thailand, and Mr and Mrs Fong Peck Yew and family, unveiled the Buddha's footprint from Thailand. The Buddha's footprint is on display in the Shrine Hall, beside the altar.

Mangala Vihara

Burmese Sangha and Temple

The Burmese Buddhist Temple (BBT) is the only Burmese Buddhist Temple in Singapore. The present new grand BBT is the replacement of the previous small BBT at 17 Kinta Road. From its modest beginning as a small temple at Kinta Road, the BBT began to grow gradually as a result of the untiring efforts of U Kyaw Gaung, also known as Khoo Teogou, a Burmese practitioner of traditional medicine and a native of Burma. U Kyaw Gaung went to Sagyin Hill, thirty miles north of Mandalay, which was famous for its superior quality marble used in making Buddha images. There he bought a large marble block weighing more than ten tons for Rs1,200. The Buddha image was sculpted out of that block in Mandalay and completed in 1918. This magnificent marble Buddha image, which stands eleven feet high, was transported to Singapore in1921. After overcoming many obstacles with the help of contributions of the venerable monks, lay-Buddhists and well-wishers, U Pannya Vamsa built this temple at the present site in 1990. It is the first and only Burmese Buddhist temple built outside Burma (Myanmar) in the traditional style appropriately adapted to the local conditions. Its magnificent marble Buddha image is the biggest enshrined outside Burma. Besides Dharma classes, religious festivals and Burmese traditional celebrations like New Year (Thingyan) are regularly held at the temple.[20]

Burmese Buddhist Temple

Vajrayana Buddhism in Singapore

Vajrayana Buddhism, also known as Tibetan Buddhism, is a comparatively recent religious phenomenon in Singapore. There are approximately forty-two Tibetan Buddhist organizations in present-day Singapore; however, the historical founding of the first Tibetan Buddhist organization took place only three decades ago.

The earliest record of the activities of Tibetan Buddhist monastics in Singapore was in January 1949. Xin Zhou Ri Bao reported that a visiting Tibetan Buddhist monk gave a talk at the Mahayana Buddhist Organization–Singapore Buddhist Lodge.[21] Although this talk managed to attract over a hundred people, the actual propagation activities of the Tibetan Buddhism in Singapore were obtructed since then probably due to the establishment of the People's Republic of China in October 1949.

The founding of Tibetan Buddhist organizations in Singapore was encouraged and guided by Tibetan Buddhist monks. From the 1960s to the 1980s, Tibetan Buddhist masters came from locations outside Tibet, especially India and Nepal. In the 1990s, China's partial relaxation on Tibetan Buddhism permitted the revival of some aspects in Tibet. Some Tibetan masters residing in Tibet were allowed more freedom to travel overseas to teach. Combined revival efforts by Tibetan Buddhist leaders both within and outside Tibet have led to a spillover of Tibetan Buddhist masters arriving in Singapore from a diversity of source locations from 1990s onwards.[22]

The propagation of all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism in Singapore occurred in two stages. The first stage was brought about by the visits of some renowned Tibetan Buddhist masters to Singapore. Due to the lack of a Tibetan Buddhist organization or a temple in Singapore, Tibetan Buddhism was not widely accessible from the early 1950s to late 1970s. Hence, the Tibetan Buddhist masters had to use the laities' homes to host Tibetan Buddhist rituals and encourage laities to set up Tibetan Buddhist organizations in Singapore. The second stage was when early Tibetan Buddhist followers took the initiative to invite Tibetan Buddhist masters to be their resident monks of the newly established organizations or to visit Singapore more regularly to conduct ritual programmes in various public areas or even in the premises of Chinese temples in Singapore. The diffusion of Tibetan Buddhism took root in this second stage. The following three Tibetan Buddhist organizations in Singapore are fine examples of this stage.

The first Tibetan Buddhist organization in Singapore – the Singapore Buddha Sasana Society - was founded in the 1970s. Its beginnings in the early 1960s was as a classroom of the Maha Bodhi School. Young people eager to know more about the Buddha's teachings got together to form a Dharma study group. Initially, the society's activities such as Dharma talks and discussions were held in the homes of members. It was only in the late 1970s that the Ven. Sakya Trizin and the Ven. Tharig Tulku Rinpoche visited Singapore. Having received encouragement from these two Tibetan masters, the members decided to operate the society out of rented premises and requested the Ven. Sakya Trizin to be their spiritual patron. When the society bought their first premises at 9 Topaz Road, the Ven. Sakya Trizin sent one of his highest ranking monks, Ponlop Lama Tashi Tenzin, to guide the members in their understanding of the Buddha's teachings. Ponlop Lama Tashi Tenzin was the principal of the Tantric College of Sakya Monastery in Tibet and he became the society's first resident monk. The society had to move a second time as a result of the government's need to acquire the Topaz Road premises for expansion of the Pan Island Expressway. This time, the move was to 37/39 Lorong 25A Geylang where more activities were introduced. During the early 1990s, circumstances made it necessary for the management committee to look for permanent premises. The plan was for a building that would incorporate both the Chinese and Tibetan style of external architecture. The features should reflect simplicity, peace and harmony. The Ven. Sakya Trizin and the then resident monk, the Ven. Dorjay from Sakya Centre, provided their guidance on the project. The new home - Sakya Tenphel Ling -(Picture 13) located at 5 Pasir Ris Drive 4 fulfils the society's dream to have a place from which it can expand its activities to include the performance of community services. This is in addition to the society's prime objective of spreading the Buddha's teachings.[23]

The Karma Kagyud Buddhist Centre (KKBC) was founded in 1981. In 1979, the Ven. Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche visited Singapore and, with his encouragement and advice, a committee headed by Mr David Chee Kim Swee was formed in preparation for the founding of

Sakya Tenphel Ling

the KKBC. A detached house at 17 Jalan Lateh was rented for KKBC's administration. In 1981, the Registrar of Societies approved the registration of the centre. The first management committee was formed on March 1982. In 1990, Rinpoche initiated the search for a new premises to cater for the expansion of KKBC's activities. With encouragement from the Ven. Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche and strong support from the members and devotees, the present centre was acquired. On December 1991, KKBC was relocated to its present premises and has since been used as the venue for most of its activities in serving the spiritual and welfare needs of its members and devotees.[24]

Karma Kagyud Buddhist Centre

The Amitabha Buddhist Centre (ABC) was established in January 1989. This Tibetan Buddhist organization is affiliated to the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), an international, non-profit organization, founded by Lama Yeshe. The FPMT is devoted to the transmission of Mahayana Buddhist tradition worldwide through teaching, meditation and community service. ABC's origins go back to 1984 when Lama Yeshe visited Singapore and gave the centre its name. Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche's connection with Singapore began in the mid-1980s. While he was on retreat in India, Rinpoche was convinced of the need to have a Dharma centre in Singapore to benefit a growing number of affluent Singaporeans. His conviction became so overwhelming that by the end of his retreat he resolved to go to Singapore and establish such a centre, which he did in 1985. The Ven. Dieter was the first teacher. Other former resident teachers include the Ven. Thubten Chodron, the Ven. Sangye Khadro, the Ven. Sarah Thresher and Geshe Dawa. The current resident teacher is Geshe Thubten Chonyi, who has been with ABC since 1999. ABC today offers opportunities for the study and practice of Tibetan Buddhism through public talks, publication of free Dharma books, Buddhist study courses, meditation classes, pujas, animal liberation, community service, recreational activities, retreats, and pilgrimages.[25]

Amitabha Buddhist Centre

The Structure of Singapore Buddhists

Although Singapore is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, Singaporeans' religious affiliation is ethnically structured to some extent. For instance, in 2000, 99.6 per cent of Singapore Malays were Muslim, 55.4 per cent of Singapore Indians were Hindu, and 64.4 per cent of Singapore Chinese adopted Chinese religions (Buddhism & Taoism).[26] Another key variable is the correlation between religious affiliation and several socio-demographic factors, including ethnicity, gender, age, education and socio-economic status.

The following charts and highlights are for easy reference.

Buddhism and Other Religions

The religious composition of adult Singapore residents has remained relatively stable over the last three decades. However, the Chinese ethnic group experienced the most significant shifts in religious affiliation between 1990 and 2000. While both Buddhism and Taoism were the traditional Chinese religions of long standing, Buddhism had become much more widespread in the past two decades and had surpassed Taoism as the main religion of the Chinese. In 2000, 54 per cent of the Chinese identified themselves as Buddhists, up from 34 per cent in 1980 and 39 per cent in 1990. (Chart 1)

Chart 1 shows clearly that the growth in the Buddhist population between 1990–2000 came mainly at the expense of Taoism, which experienced a decline in the number of followers, continuing the trend observed between 1980–1990. However, what stands out is the drop in the proportion of people subscribing to Buddhism, from 42.5 per cent in 2000 to 33.3 per cent in 2010. This was the religion's first dip in thirty years. In contrast, the percentage in the other faiths either held steady or grew slightly over the ten-year period. The decline in Buddhism over the past decade may be traced to the rise of churches, more people wanting to choose their own faith or the lack of one, and greater clarity between Buddhism and Taoism.

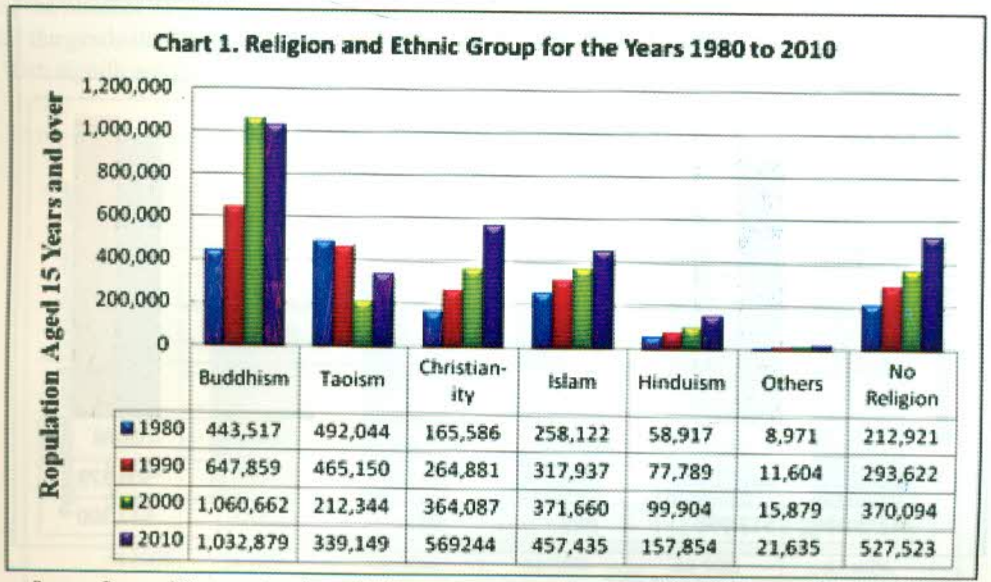


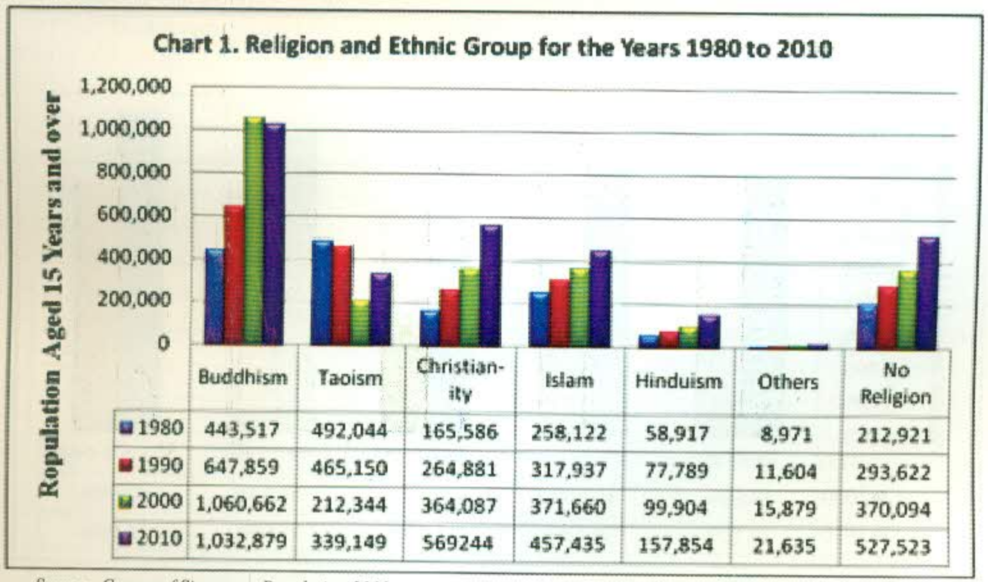
Chart 1. Religion and Ethnic Group for the Years 1980 to 2010

	Buddhism	Taoism	Christian-ity	Islam	Hinduism	Others	No Religion
■ 1980	443,517	492,044	165,586	258,122	58,917	8,971	212,921
■ 1990	647,859	465,150	264,881	317,937	77,789	11,604	293,622
■ 2000	1,060,662	212,344	364,087	371,660	99,904	15,879	370,094
■ 2010	1,032,879	339,149	569244	457,435	157,854	21,635	527,523

Source: Census of Singapore Population 2000 & 2010

Buddhism and Ethnicity

As already mentioned, Singapore religion is closely associated with ethnicity. The latest census (2010) shows that 97.7 per cent (1,009,158 Singapore residents) of the followers of Buddhism in Singapore are Chinese (Chart 2).[27] Only 2.3 percent of the Buddhists in Singapore are Malays, Indians and Others. ("Others" comprises all persons other than Chinese, Malays and Indians in Singapore. They include Eurasians, Europeans, Arabs, Japanese, etc)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Source: Census of Singapore Population 2010

Buddhism and Gender

The 2010 census indicates that more females than males identified themselves as Buddhists. Besides Indian Buddhists, Chinese female Buddhists amount to 26,833 more persons than Chinese males. Malay and 'Others' female Buddhists are 310 and 4,670 more than the same ethnic males respectively (Chart 3).[28]

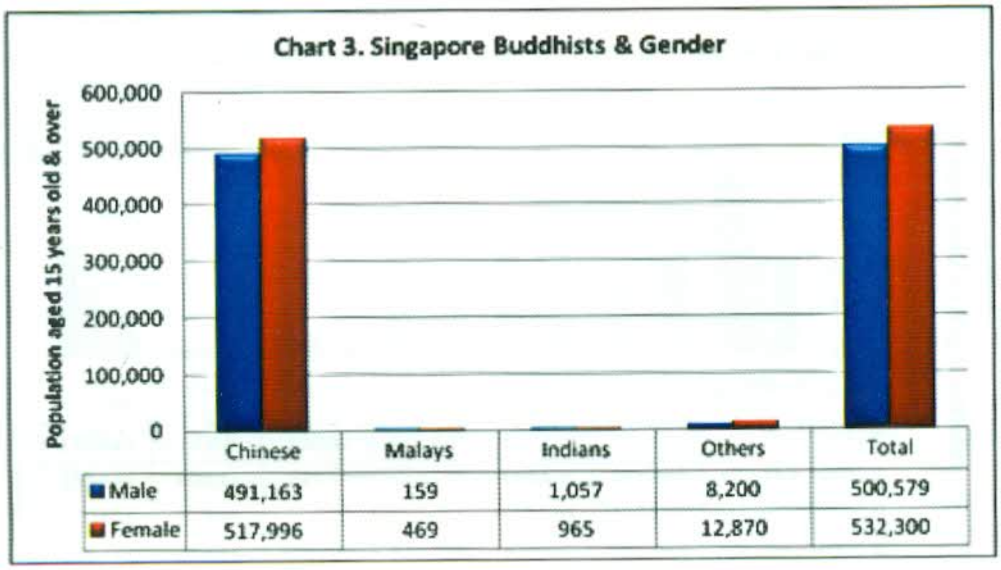


Chart 3. Singapore Buddhists & Gender

	Chinese	Malays	Indians	Others	Total
■ Male	491,163	159	1,057	8,200	500,579
■ Female	517,996	469	965	12,870	532,300

Source: Census of Singapore Population 2010

Buddhism and Age

There is no relationship between age and religion for Singapore Malays and Indians. However, for the Chinese, the level of religious affiliation is positively correlated with age: the higher the age, the higher is the level of religious affiliation. Conversely, the younger the age, the higher is the proportion reporting no religion. As for Buddhism, it was popular across all age groups but still there were higher concentrations of Buddhists among the older adults aged forty-five years and over as compared with the younger adults (Chart 4).

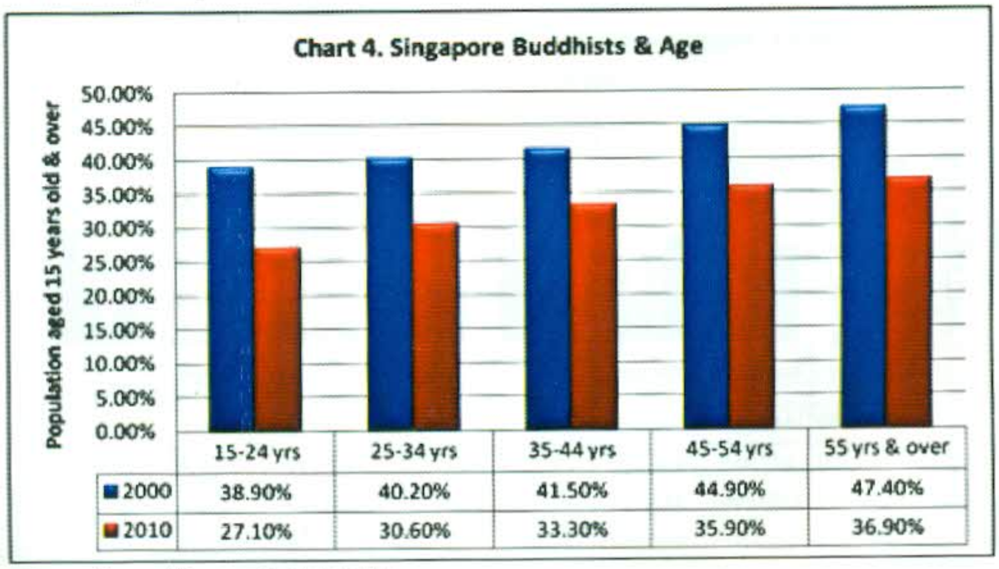


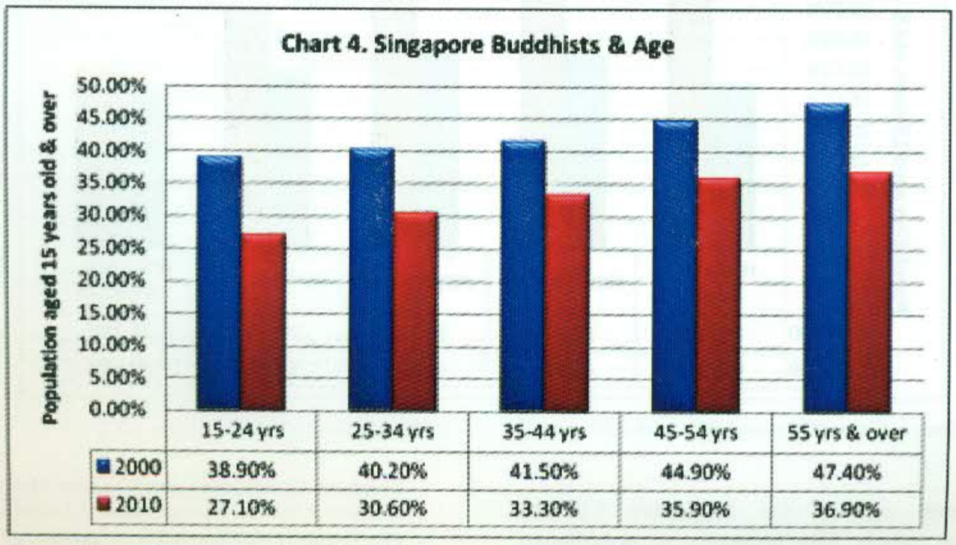
Chart 4. Singapore Buddhists & Age

	15-24 yrs	25-34 yrs	35-44 yrs	45-54 yrs	55 yrs & over
■ 2000	38.90%	40.20%	41.50%	44.90%	47.40%
■ 2010	27.10%	30.60%	33.30%	35.90%	36.90%

Source: Census of Singapore Population 2000

Buddhism and Education

Buddhism appears to have attracted a sizeable group of followers from all levels of education. The fastest growth was among those with below secondary qualifications. Over the decade, there was a sizeable increase in proportion of Buddhists among graduates. Their share in the graduate population increased from 15 per cent in 1990 to 24 per cent in 2000. In absolute terms, the number of graduate Buddhists jumped four-fold between 1990 and 2000, compared with an increase of 1.7 times for the graduate Christians. Among those with post-secondary qualifications, the Buddhists had become the largest group with significant gains in the absolute and relative sizes of their population (Chart 5).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	15-24 yrs	25-34 yrs	35-44 yrs	45-54 yrs	55 yrs & over
🟦 2000	38.90%	40.20%	41.50%	44.90%	47.40%
🟥 2010	27.10%	30.60%	33.30%	35.90%	36.90%

Source: Census of Singapore Population 2000 & 2010

Buddhism and Language

Cultural factors, as manifested through the home language, have a strong influence on the religious affiliation of the resident population. Singapore residents who have adopted English as their home language appear to have greater exposure to the influence of Christianity. Thus, in 2000, Christians formed the largest group among the English-speaking population. In contrast, Buddhism, as a traditional Chinese religion, was the main religion of the Mandarin- and dialect-speaking populations (Chart 6).

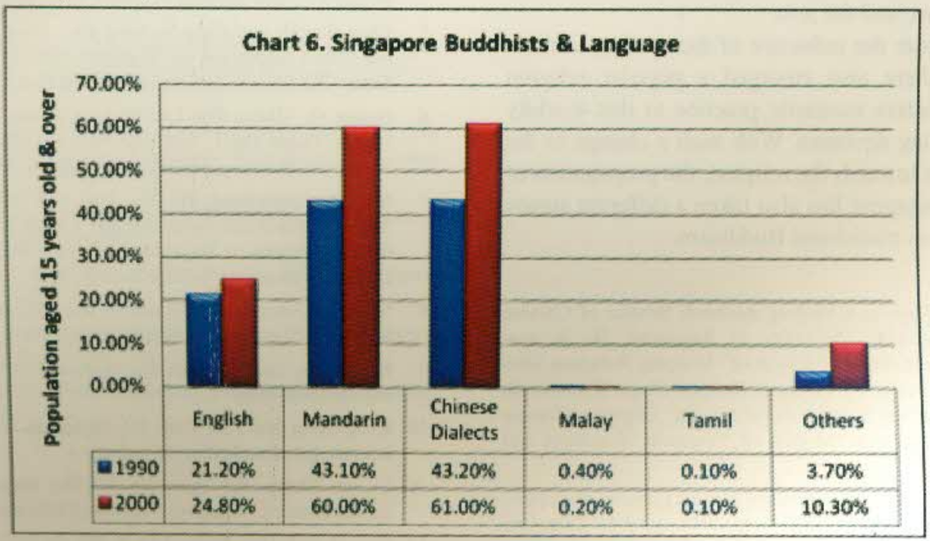


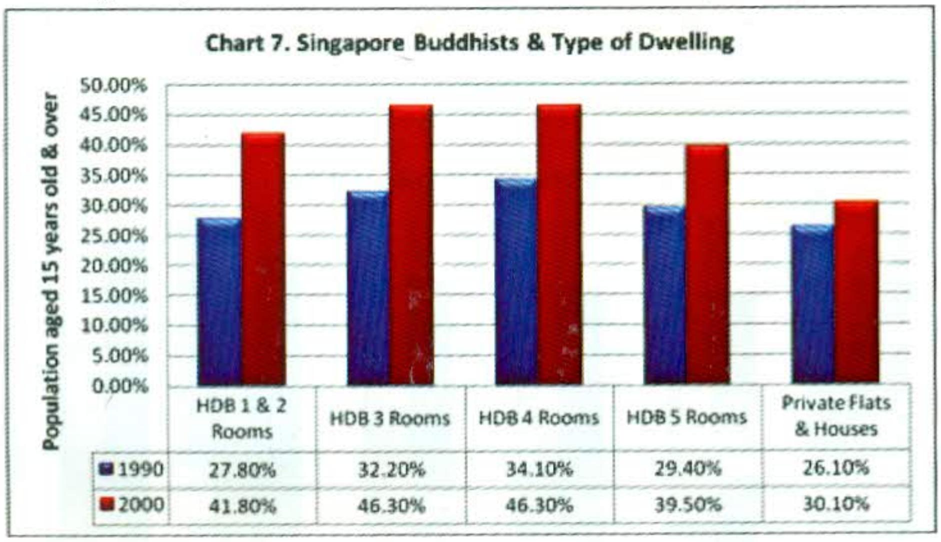
Chart 6. Singapore Buddhists & Language

	English	Mandarin	Chinese Dialects	Malay	Tamil	Others
🟦 1990	21.20%	43.10%	43.20%	0.40%	0.10%	3.70%
🟥 2000	24.80%	60.00%	61.00%	0.20%	0.10%	10.30%

Source: Census of Singapore Population 2000

Buddhism and Type of Dwelling

Residents of private flats and houses tended to have larger representations of Christians and persons with no religion than HDB flat dwellers. In comparison, the bulk of the HDB dwellers were Buddhists. (Chart 7)



Source: Census of Singapore Population 2000

Conclusion

In the nineteenth century, the Singapore Chinese community were mostly firm believers of polytheism rather than true disciples of Buddhist teachings. However, with the effort of many Buddhists monks and laities during the twentieth century, the propagation of Buddhism under the Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana schools has been successfully transmitted in this island. Contemporary Singapore has gained from about a century of historical Buddhist influence that has greatly enriched the city's literature and the arts.

However, under the influence of the various schools of Buddhism, there also emerged a popular religion moving from austere monastic practice to this-worldly practice for the lay devotees. With such a change in the people's mindset towards the religion, the propagation of Buddhism in Singapore has also taken a different stance and meaning from traditional Buddhism.

Notes

1 Dr Hue Guan Thye is a Visiting Research Scholar of Chinese Department, National University of Singapore. He is now undertaking a field research project of "Mapping Religious Sites of Singapore" directed by Professor Kenneth Dean. His research interests are Buddhist Studies, Taoist Studies, Singapore Chinese Temple, the Propagation Models of Singapore Buddhism and Taoism.

2 *Census of Population 2010: Advance Census Release*. Singapore: Singapore Department of Statistics, 2010. pp.3-5. Singapore Chinese refers to persons of Chinese origin such as Hokkiens, Teochews, Cantonese, Hakkas, Hainanese, Hockchias, Foochows, Henghuas, Shanghainese, etc; Singapore Malays refers to persons of Malay or Indonesian origin, such as Javanese, Boyanese, Bugis, etc; *Singapore Indians* refers to persons of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Sri Lankan origin such as Tamils, Malayalis, Punjabis, Bengalis, Singhalese, etc. Other Ethnic Groups comprises Eurasians, Europeans, Arabs, Japanese, etc. See *Census of Population 2010: Advance Census Release*. p.35.

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Bas-relief of Musicians - Borobudur

ESSAY 16

Buddhism in the Indonesia

Its Advent, Glory, Revival and Survival

Rev. Sasminto (Dhammasiri)

Introduction

The existence of Candi Borobudur has proved to the world that in ancient times, Indonesia was a stronghold of Buddhism. However, now it is the largest Muslim country in the world. According to a report published in 2008 by the Ministry of Religion, the percentage of Muslims was 88.8 per cent of the Indonesian population, whereas the percentage of Buddhists was 0.6 per cent. That means there are only 1,306,248 Buddhists in Indonesia out of the total population of 217,346,140.

Therefore, the study of the history of Buddhism in Indonesia is of interest. To study it comprehensively, however, research has to be divided into three parts: ancient Buddhism, dormant Buddhism, and modern Buddhism. Ancient Buddhism covers the history of Buddhism in Indonesia since its inception to its decline in the fifteenth century. Dormant Buddhism spans the period of Buddhism from its decline to the time of its revival. And modern Buddhism covers the history of Buddhism from its revival to the present time.

Ancient Buddhism

In the past it seems there was a strong relationship between Indonesia and India, the land of the Buddha. This relationship was established through economic bonds - by merchants who came in search of commerce. It was these merchants who introduced Indian culture, including religions, to Indonesia.

According to archeological discoveries, Buddha statues of Amaravati style have been found in different parts of Indonesia. According to reports, the Buddha statues of this style first originated in the third century CE. Most probably, although there is no historical evidence, this type of statue was introduced by religious-minded merchants. Even with the discovery of such ancient Buddha statues, no historical record exists to demonstrate that Buddhism was already in existence in the island in the early first millennium. In fact the earliest reference to the existence of Buddhism dates back to the beginning of the fifth century CE. This was recorded by Fa-Hien who visited Java in 414 CE. He wrote that Brahmanism flourished in the island. However, Buddhism was not worth mentioning.

Establishment of Buddhism

It was Indian merchants who almost certainly discovered the cluster of islands now known as Indonesia. Certainly the information provided by them encouraged Indian people to visit the islands. An early well-known visitor was the Ven. Gunavarman from Kashmir. It is not known whether he came to Indonesia by invitation to propagate Dharma or just happened to come by chance. It appears that he was a prince of Kashmir, who renounced the world and became a monk. In due course he went to Sri Lanka where he learnt meditation and soon gained popularity among the population. Since he wanted to avoid such fame, he left Sri Lanka for Java. It is said that he first converted the mother of the king of Java, and later on, the king himself.

Being convinced of the Buddha's teaching, the king wished to renounce the world and join the monastic life just like his revered teacher, the Ven. Gunavarman. But his subjects wished him to remain on the throne. He acquiesced on condition that they must practice the true teaching of the Buddha - which they did, because of their respect for the king.

As a result, the people lived harmoniously, and the country was peaceful and prosperous. Once, however, a group of robbers disturbed this harmony. The king consulted the Ven. Gunavarman who advised him it was the duty of the ruler to protect the country. The king did so accordingly by driving the bandits from the country.

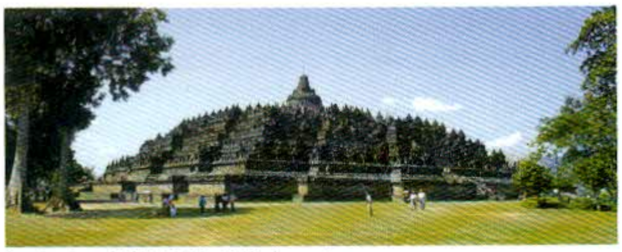
This demonstrates that it was the Ven. Gunavarman who established Buddhism in Java about ten years after the arrival of Fa-Hien in the island. But the Ven. Gunavarman did not stay in Java until the end of his life. Instead, he left for China for further propagation of the Buddha's teaching.

Golden Era of Buddhism

The advent of Buddhist merchants who introduced Buddhism unofficially, and later by Ven. Gunavarman who propagated Buddhism formally, exerted much influence on the life of the people and changed the monarchical system. Thus, in the following centuries, many Buddhist kingdoms shone forth, gaining fame in neighbouring and far-distant countries.

Kaliñga is supposed to have been the earliest Buddhist kingdom in Indonesia, situated at Keling, Jepara, in central Java. Kaliñga was ruled by a just queen named, Sima, who was influenced by Hinayanic teachings. News of this kingdom reached an Arabian king, who wanted to find out whether all was as it was said to be. So he sent an envoy to place a piece of gold on the roadside. No one touched the gold but accidentally the prince of the kingdom trampled it. The queen was so angry that she wanted to kill her own son. A minister intervened and persuaded her to desist. However, she still wanted to punish her son by mutilating his leg, and on the advice of the minister, the prince's toe was cut off.

Sri Vijaya was a Buddhist kingdom situated in present Sumatra. During the golden age of this kingdom, Sri Vijaya became a center of Buddhist learning. I-tsing said that every subject taught in Nalanda was also taught there, which was why he suggested his fellow Buddhist travelers to stay in Sri Vijaya to gain knowledge before they made their way to India. Beside It-tsing, Dhammapala, a famous professor of Nalanda also visited the kingdom. Later, in the eleventh century, Atisa Dipañkara also traveled to the kingdom to learn some important Buddhist doctrines from a famous master.



Borobudur a UNESCO World Heritage site

Borobudur-perfect-buddha

The capital of the Syailendra dynasty was situated in the province of Central Java. This dynasty is credited with the building of Borobudur – known as Candi Borobudur locally - and must have had close links with other regional countries. For instance the architect of Borobudur was from India and there is an inscription in the Candi Ratu Boko that mentions Sri Lanka.

Decline of Buddhism

In the final stage of the construction of Borobudur, however, a syncretism between Buddhism and Hinduism began to take place. There is no indication of this in Borobudur, but Queen Smaratunga married a Hindu king in order to preserve the throne for herself and finalize the construction of Borobudur.

When the kingdom was shifted to Western Java, the influence of Hinduism grew stronger. However, both religions existed harmoniously without any sense of enmity or envy. After several monarchical systems the kingdom evolved, giving rise to the Majapahit empire. In this period, Indonesia was united under one flag. However, Buddhism began to decline. It was when Buddhism in the form of Tantrism was becoming strongly syncretized with Hinduism that a Muslim invasion took place. It started with the king's marriage to a Muslim princess of Campa. Then the princes staying in Majapahit wanted to learn more about Islamic teachings from Muslim priests who the queen invited to the palace. Consequently, many Muslim missionaries came to Indonesia to propagate Islam.

Books such as Dharmogandhul and Gatot Loco present evidence that Muslim missionaries debated with Buddhist scholars. It can clearly be seen that Muslim missionaries were displeased when defeated in debates. Since they could not win against the Buddhist scholars through intellectual power, they approached the prince, Raden Patah. Although he was reluctant, they incited him to kill his father who was a follower of heretical teachings. Raden Patah's armies burnt all the Buddhist books to be found, but his father escaped with two Buddhist ministers. Eventually he was caught in Banyuwangi.

Buddhism in Dormant State

After the fall of Majapahit, Islam grew stronger and became the official religion in the country. But the ascension of Islam did not completely wipe out Buddhism, for by then Buddhist teachings had already taken root. Thus, although people often declared themselves to be Muslims they were actually Buddhists. Various teachings and philosophies practiced by the people are already discussed elsewhere, and need not be repeated here.

Apart from those who practiced Buddhism but declared themselves to be Muslims, there were many who did not want to change their religion. They embraced Buddhism but did not want to create trouble, so they isolated themselves to remote areas, far away from Muslim society, and have remained there until now. In the remote area of Borneo, for example, there is a group of people who do not want to embrace any religion except that of their teacher, the Buddha. But if the present generation is asked, "Who is the Buddha?" they are unable to give an explanation. In Sulebes, there are traditional religious leaders called "Bisu". They remain unmarried and their religious practices are almost similar to those sanctioned in Tantric Buddhism. Most probably, the word "bisu" derives from "bhikṣu" because the Javanese pronounce the word as "wiku". In recent years, there was an indigenous religious leader called "Kejawen" who admitted the limitation of his knowledge: "I cannot teach you further. But if you insist on wanting to learn more, you have to become Buddhists." Around 70 per cent of the population of the village followed his suggestion.

These are just a few examples to show that Buddhism still existed, though officially it had disappeared. Due to isolation, discommunication and the weakness of oral tradition over 500 years, the present generation has lost the real teachings of the Buddha. Yet faith in the Buddha remains without any diminution from generation to generation.

Revival of Buddhism

In the last confrontation with Islam, it was said that Buddhism would regain prominence after a period of 500 years. During this period of Islamic domination, Buddhism had become a "sleeping religion". It began to "wake up" in the 1930s. According to Moestika Dharma, an Indonesian magazine, in 1932 there was already a Buddhist organization called the Java Buddhist Association (JBA). The President was Ernest Erle Power and the Secretary was Josiast v. Dienst. The JBA was part of the International Buddhist Missionary organization, headquartered in Thaton, Burma. Under the leadership of the two Dutchmen, the JBA approached Chinese temples, which were under the management of Confucians, and was allowed to give Dharma sermons in the temples around Jakarta.

On March 4, 1934, the Ven. Kotahena Narada of Sri Lanka was invited by Ong Su An, a pioneer of theosophy of Bandung, to visit Indonesia, and he gave Dharma sermons in Chinese temples such as in Solo, Bogor, Jakarta and Yogyakarta. While in Yogyakarta, he converted several people to Buddhism, among whom there was just one Javanese.

The Ven. Narada's visit was also marked by the establishment of the JBA's Afdeeling Batavia and Afdeeling Buitenzorg. However, JBA Afdeeling Batavia separated from JBA to facilitate wider movement of the organization, such as embracing and propagating Mahayana.

Thus Chinese temples had become stepping stones for the propagation of the Dharma in Indonesia. After his visit in 1934, the Ven. Narada returned to Indonesia several times. On one of his visits, when he was accompanied by the Ven. Piyadassi, other delegations from Burma, Cambodia and Thailand also arrived. The delegations gave ordination to three Indonesians. After this event, many Dhammadhutas from Thailand, Burma, Cambodia and Sri Lanka came to Indonesia to propagate the Buddha's teaching. Due to their tireless efforts, Buddhism arose from its slumber, and is now recognized as one of the official religions of Indonesia.

Buddhist Schools and Organizations

Through I-tsing, it is known know that Hinayana flourished in Indonesia in the early period, while Mahayana flourished in other periods. But later on, Mahayana - especially that of Tantric Buddhism - flourished until its fall in the fifteenth century.

Today, all three traditions, Theravada, Mahayana and Tantrayana, exist. These three traditions are recognized as Buddhist sects by the Religious Department of Indonesia. Beside these three traditions, there are seventeen "majelis" that are also registered:

1. Majelis Buddhayāna Indonesia (MBI),
2. Majelis Agama Buddha Tri Dharma Indonesia (TRIDHARMA),
3. Majelis Agama Buddha Theravada Indonesia (MAGABUDHI),
4. Majelis Umat Buddha Theravada Indonesia (MAJUBUTHI),
5. Majelis Pandita Buddha Maitreya Indonesia (MAPANBUMI),
6. Majelis Agama Buddha Tantrayana Satya Buddha Indonesia (MADHATANTRI),
7. Majelis Agama Buddha Mahayana Indonesia (MAJABUMI),
8. Majelis Agama Buddha Mahayana Indonesia Tanah Suci (MAJABUMI TANAH SUCI),
9. Majelis Umat Buddha Mahayana Indonesia (MAJUBUMI),
10. Majelis Mahayana Buddhis Indonesia (MAHABUDHI),

11. Majelis Agama Buddha Tantrayana Kasogatan Zhen Fo Zhong Indonesia (KASOGATAN),
12. Majelis Agama Buddha Tantrayana Indonesia (MAJABUDTI),
13. Manjelis Agama Buddha Eka Dharma Indonesia (MEDI),
14. Majelis I Kuan Tau Indonesia (MIKTI),
15. Parisadha Buddha Dharma Niciren Syosyu Indonesia (PBDNSI),
16. Pandita Sabha Buddha Dharma Indonesia (PSBDI),
17. Soka Gakai Indonesia (SOKA GAKAI).

The word "majelis" has been understood as "sect" by most Indonesian people. However, critical study does not support this contention. Take, for example, Majelis Agama Buddha Theravada Indonesia (MAGABUDHI). It does not represent Theravadin Buddhism. Instead, it stands parallel to the Theravada Buddhist Youth of Indonesia and Association of Theravadin Women of Indonesia.

Challenges

Buddhism in Indonesia faces problems and challenges, although they are different to those that other countries need to address. The reason for this is because of the structure of the society, the law, and economical and educational backgrounds.

The Problem of God

The first State ideology is "Believe in one and only God." This ideology was proposed with the intention of showing that Indonesians are religious-minded people and therefore they must believe in God. At first this State ideology did not create problems for Buddhism. But since the "Communist Tragedy" in 1965 it became mandatory for every religion to believe in God. Every religion that did not follow this ideology was considered as atheist, equal to being a Communist, and was illegal in Indonesia. For this reason, Buddhist leaders had to formulate the concept of "God". The Buddhist leaders at that time chose "Sang Hyang Adi-Buddha" as the "God" of Buddhism. The phrase was taken from an ancient Buddhist book, written in ancient Javanese, Sang Hyang Kamahanikan. This concept of "God" caused a "chaos" among Buddhists in Indonesia because the concept was accepted only by Tantrayana, Mahayana and Theravada belonging to the Buddhayana School. However, the strict Theravadins did not accept it. Therefore, they took Nibbana, with its definition found in the Udana VIII, 3, as the concept of "God" and so Indonesian Buddhism at the moment possesses two concepts of "God", Sang Hyang Adi-Buddha and Nibbana. Buddhist scholars from other countries might not accept the concept of "God" formulated by Indonesian Buddhists. However, they have to understand the reason for accepting such a concept: to be in line with government policy.

"Buddha Bar"

The phrase "Buddha Bar" was coined by Roymond Visan. Based on his concept, the first Buddha Bar was established in Paris in 1996. Since then, several branches were opened in Beirut, Cairo, Dubai and elsewhwere. After the daughter of Sutiyoso, the governor of Jakarta, visited France, she was inspired to open a branch of Buddha Bar in Indonesia. Her plan was approved by the Tourism Department and a few Indonesian Buddhists. However, Buddhists in general were not consulted on the matter. After the Buddha Bar was opened, many Buddhists objected. According to them, the Buddha Bar insults the religion as various Buddhist symbols are displayed and girls dance erotically before the Buddha statue.

Various Buddhist organizations founded an anti-Buddha Bar movement supported by many Buddhists in Indonesia. This movement held various strikes condemning the Buddha Bar, and demanding its closure by the government. In addition, a court case was filed. It took more than two years for the Central Jakarta District Court to order the closure. However, the problem is not entirely solved since the owner of Buddha Bar has filed an appeal.

The Candi Borobudur Claimed as a Muslim Heritage

It is well-known that Borobudur is a Buddhist heritage. The stupas, statues and reliefs represent Buddhism in its finest architectural form. After being forgotten, it was rediscovered in the early nineteenth century. Since then, various restorations have been attempted, the latest carried out by the Indonesian government in conjunction with UNESCO between 1975 and 1982. However, on January 15, 1985, a group of radical Muslims detonated a bomb that destroyed several stupas. Furthermore, recently a group of Muslims claimed that Borobudur, Mendut, Pawon and Queen Boko Palace were of Islamic heritage. Fahmi Basya, a mathematical lecturer from Syarif Hidayatullah Islamic State University in Jakarta, claims that there is proof that Borobudur was built by Prophet Solomon, who in Koran is called Sulaiman. He supports this statement with an obscure mathematical theory.

Many people deride this theory, which is mixed with legend and some ludicrous ideas. But Fahmi Basya was so sure that Borobudur and others are Muslim sites, that he and his group presented a petition to the Constitutional

Court claiming that Borobudur and other sites belong to Muslims. Thus far, no decision has been taken in connection with this claim.

Pedagogical Problems

Since its inception, Buddhism in Indonesia has tried to develop monasteries as places of gathering and precincts for the performance of Buddhist rituals. Buddhists also established schools and universities. Indeed, a number of approved Buddhist schools have been recognized as top schools in the country. Beside those schools, ten Buddhist universities have been set up. However, the establishment of the schools and universities has meant that Buddhism has encountered several pedagogical problems. For example, many teachers and lecturers of general subjects, such as English, maths, agriculture, and so on, are not Buddhists.

Up to now, Buddhist universities only provide graduate classes, not postgraduate classes, because there are not enough Buddhist scholars to coordinate postgraduate teaching. There are only a few Buddhist scholars with doctoral degrees in each tradition and they do not want to establish a postgraduate institute. Some syllabuses provided by the government are not suitable for postgraduate level: they need to be upgraded to make them more academic and advanced.

Conversion to Other Religions

The Buddhist population in Indonesia is constantly fluctuating. In 1965 after the "Communist tragedy", Confucianism was abolished as an official religion. Some Confucians converted to Buddhism. However, in the year 2000, Confucianism was once more recognized as an official religion. This recognition caused the Buddhist population to drop drastically. In 1998, the Buddhist population was 1.3 per cent of the Indonesian population. In the year 2000, it became 0.84 per cent, and by 2005 it dropped to 0.61 per cent. However, from 2005 to 2008, there was an increase in the Buddhist population from 1,299,565 to 1,306,248 , which meant that there were 6,683 new Buddhists even though Indonesians still face the problem of conversion to other religions. This is because according to Indonesian law, marriage is only possible between partners of the same religion. Inter-religious marriages are considered illegal. Therefore many Buddhist were converted to other religions, just for the sake of marriage. People are able to convert to other religions because the State grants freedom to choose religion according to individual preference. But forced conversion is prohibited.

Other Problems

Some provinces of Indonesia are dominated by a particular religion. Bali, for example, is dominated by Hindus, Irian Jaya is dominated by Christians, while Aceh is dominated by Muslims. In such provinces, other religions remain as minorities. In former times, minority religions built mosques, churches, monasteries and temples, but this created religious disharmony. Therefore, the Home Ministry and Ministry of Religion issued a decree regarding the establishment of religious places that stated there should be at least ninety members of the religion supported by at least sixty members of society. This decree puts Buddhism in a difficult position, for Buddhists are scattered from west to east, from north to south. Often, their number is less than twenty in one place. Theoretically, they are not supposed to build a religious place for gathering, though practically, sometimes it depends on the society in the location concerned. The Buddhist monastery in Sumatra has been opposed on the grounds of the above-mentioned decree. The people of another religion demanded the removal of the Buddha statue at the top of the monastery. Such protest continues but negotiations are being held.

Turmoil among Buddhists

The small Buddhist population is divided into seventeen groups that came into existence because of incessant conflicts among Buddhists. The reason for such dissension is due to either personal interest or group interest. Some groups wish to join the Organization of Representatives of Buddhists (WALUBI), while others wish to remain independent.

Religious Places

There are two types of religious places found in Indonesia: ancient and modern. The ancient Buddhist places are mainly situated in Java and Sumatra. In Sumatra they are the ones mostly built during the time of Sri Vijaya. The main sites of this period are Candi Gumpung, Candi Tinggi, Candi Astano, and Candi Kembar Batu. These sites are mostly made of burnt bricks. This material is also used in some ancient Buddhist sites in Java. Candi Batujaya (West Java) and Candi Brahu (East Java) are made of the same material. Candi Kalasan, Mendut, Pawon, Borobudur (Central Java), Sumber Awan (East Java), and others, are made of stone.

The newly-built Buddhist religious places deserve to be visited. There are two replicas of Swedagon Pagoda: one in Malang, small in size, and another in Medan. The replica found in Medan is the second largest in Asia. According to the data published by the Religious

Department of Indonesia, there are about 2.943 Buddhist monasteries in the country. These places, as elsewhere, are called viharas: for instance Maha Vihara Majapahit (Mojokerto, East Java), Vihara Mendut (Magelang, Central Java), Maha Vihara Duta Maitreya (Batam, Sumatra), Vihara Mahavira Graha (Denpasar, Bali). In Indonesia, smaller religious places for gathering and ceremonies are called cetiyas but their number has not been ascertained.

Most of the Buddhist Schools or groups have their main office in Jakarta. They include the Vihara Jakarta Dhammacakka Jaya (Theravada, North Jakarta), Vihara Mahavira Graha Pusat (Mahayana, North Jakarta), Ekayana Buddhist Center (Buddhayana, West Jakarta), Vihara Vajra Bumi Jayakarta (Tantrayna, West Jakarta).

Buddhist Festivals and Celebrations

The largest Buddhist festival in Indonesia is Vesak, celebrated principally at Borobudur. The celebration usually commences by fetching water from the natural spring at Umbul Jumprit, Temanggung, Central Java. This water is meant for pirit-water (what is called pirith-pan in Sri Lanka). Natural fire from Mrapen, Grobogan, Central Java is utilized to kindle the candles during the Vesak celebration. After that a procession is held, starting from the Candi Mendut, passing the Candi Pawon to Borobudur. The procession carries a Buddha statue, Buddhist flags, and symbols, in order to perform a ceremony with a thousand participants from all schools and Buddhist groups. The procession is timed to arrive at Borobudur an hour or two prior to the peak moment of Vesak, when a meditation session is conducted. The peak moment of Vesak varies each year. It can be at midnight, morning or day time, depending on the position of the moon. The program also includes a Dharma sermon by a member of the Sañgha.

A month prior to Vesak day, many Buddhist activities are performed, such as the observance of the eight precepts, for an entire month. During that month, there are continuous Dharma sermons nightly in the temples. A month after Vesak day there are further Vesak celebrations. Sometimes, due to the lack of monks, the celebrations have to be prolonged for more than a month.

Beside Vesak, Indonesian Buddhists also celebrate Asadha (the first sermon of the Buddha), Kaṭhina (offering of robes to the members of the Sañgha after observing a rain retreat), and Maghapūja (celebrating the day in which 1,250 arahants assembled). Some sects still perform ceremonies to transfer merit to departed ones. This is a large ceremony, taking place in the temples just like the celebration of Asadha, Kaṭhina and Maghapuja.

Buddhist Pioneers of Indonesia

Regarding the Buddhist pioneers of Indonesia, there are some important figures to be mentioned. In general they have contributed to the revival and development of Buddhism in Indonesia. Without them, modern Buddhism of Indonesia would certainly not be what it is.

The Ven. Ashin Jinarakkhita was one of these early pioneers. He was ordained by the Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw in Burma in 1954. After returning to Indonesia, he established the Sañgha, subsequently called Sañgha Agung Indonesia, and also a group of Buddhists called the Buddhayana. This group accommodates three schools of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana and Tantrayana. He was also regarded as the person who took the responsibility to maintain Sang Hyang Adi-Buddha as the concept of "God" in Indonesian Buddhism. Due to his dedication, the government awarded him the honorary title Bintang Mahaputra Utama.

The Ven. Jinadhammo, his fellow-monk, has contributed much to the development of Buddhism in Sumatra, especially in Aceh, West Sumatra, North Sumatra, Riau and Riau Islands. Under his guidance, Buddhism has developed substantially in these provinces. Although he is affiliated to Buddhayana, he strictly practices the Theravada tradition. He also sends his disciples to Thailand to learn the Buddha's teaching further.

The Ven. Girirakkhito, who was born in Bali and ordained in Thailand, is also an important figure. In his early monastic life he joined the Sañgha under the leadership of the Ven. Ashin Jinarakkhita. However, later on he gave up his membership and joined the Sañgha Theravada of Indonesia. He became the President of the Union of Buddhist Representatives of Indonesia (WALUBI) and also a member of parliament, representing Buddhists (each religion has to have a representative in parliament). He composed many Buddhist songs and established a meditation center in his hometown.

Another important figure of the Sañgha Theravada of Indonesia is the Ven. Pannavaro. He obtained his higher ordination in Thailand in 1977. Although the Sañgha Theravada of Indonesia was established by the Ven. Aggabalo and four friends, the Ven. Pannavaro contributed much to its development. At present, he is the President (Sañghanāyaka) of the Sañgha Theravada of Indonesia. For his contribution to the development of Buddhism in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Thailand he has been awarded several honorary monastic titles.

Ven. Prajnavira is an important figure of the Mahayana School. Due to his skill and knowledge, many people seek his guidance and became faithful followers, supporting him to establish many Buddhist centers in Indonesia. Furthermore, he also has established several Buddhist centers in other countries. For such dedicated services the Sri Lanka Sañgha awarded him a monastic title.

Besides those venerable monks, there are also lay people who have dedicated their life to the progress of Buddhism. However, due to limitations of space, their names and contributions cannot be mentioned here.

Buddhist Literature

In its period of glory in ancient Indonesia, Buddhism produced great Buddhist scholars, which was why many foreign counterparts visited Indonesia to broaden their knowledge. Therefore, Indonesia should have produced profound and extensive Buddhist literature. However, only few Buddhist texts exist. Some among them are Sutasoma, Sang Hyang Kamayanikan, Dharmopapati, and Kidung Dadang Dudang. Since these books have been discussed briefly elsewhere, they will not be discussed here.

According to Dharmogandul, an historical book written in modern Javanese, when Muslim armies defeated the Majapahit Empire, many Buddhist books were reduced to ashes. Thus, it is possible that many Buddhist books of scholarly standard vanished together with the decline of Majapahit.

To provide a better understanding of Buddhism, the Ministry of Buddhist Affairs undertook the task of translating Tipitaka Pali/Tripitaka Sanskrit into Bahasa Indonesia. However, this task did not proceed well, and in recent years, some have independently started to translate Tipitaka/Tripitaka into Bahasa Indonesia. Because of their dedication, the Vinaya Pitaka has been translated to some extent. However, Digha Nikaya, Majjhima Nikaya, Samyutta Nikaya and some other books have been translated completely. Beside these canonical books, some other books such as Visuddhimagga, Abhidhamma-attha Sañgaha, have also been translated. Some have been translated from their original language - Sanskrit or Pali, while others are based on English translation. These translations have made a significant contribution to the understanding of Buddhism by those who are unable to read Pali, Sanskrit or English.

Contribution from and to the State and Society

Having been evident in Indonesia since a millennium ago, the Buddhist contribution to the State is evident in several fields.

First, Buddhist contribution to the State is economic. As is well-known, there are numerous Buddhist sites in Indonesia, scattered in Sumatra, Java and other places. These historical Buddhist sites are under the supervision of the State Archeological Department and are promoted by the Department of Culture and Tourism. Accordingly, tourists from various countries visit these historic sites. Take Borobudur, which attracts tourists because of its aesthetic and religious value. According to the Head Department of Culture and Tourism of Central Java, Dr Maryanto, every year Borobudur earns approximately US $240.000. Other Buddhist sites are making a similar contribution to the State. These sites also provide opportunities to local traders to earn extra income.

Second is the contribution to the national language of Indonesia, Bahasa Indonesia. The root of Bahasa Indonesia is Malay. However, Indonesians have developed the language by adopting vocabularies from other languages. As Buddhism has existed in Indonesia for a long period of time, the founding fathers of Bahasa Indonesia could not ignore the presence of Buddhist vocabularies. The word "Bahasa" itself is derived from "bhassa" in Pali or "bhaṣya" in Sanskrit. In Pali, the term "bhassa" means "speech, conversation, way of talking, disputation". But when it is used in Bahasa Indonesia, it means "language". There is a slight change in the spelling as well as in the meaning, as happens to other words adopted by Bahasa Indonesia. Sometimes the meaning would be narrower or broader. The word "dosa" for example, is adopted with similar spelling but the meaning becomes wider, for in Bahasa Indonesia it means "the action that transgresses the law of God or religion; wrong action". But the word becomes even wider in sense because in Pali it means "anger, ill-will, evil intention, wickedness, corruption, hatred". A comparison of vocabularies of Bahasa Indonesia and Pali or Sanskrit shows that there are hundreds of terms in Bahasa Indonesia that have been adopted from Sanskrit or Pali.

Third is the contribution to the national motto of Indonesia. The coat-of-arms of Indonesia is Garuda Pancasila. The Garuda clutches in its talons a scroll bearing a national motto that reads "bhinneka tunggal ika", meaning "unity in diversity". The motto is quoted from an ancient Buddhist book titled Sutasoma, written by Mpu Tantular in the fourteenth century. The purpose of the author was to describe the beauty in which Buddhism and Hinduism could live peacefully and harmoniously. The motto "bhinneka tunggal ika" is really important for the unity of Indonesia as the country consists of numerous tribes and hundreds of languages. Hence, the slogan helps to promote peace and harmony in the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society.

Indonesian Buddhists today are also active in making their contribution to society. Every year in the month of Vesak they distribute essentials to the needy. If there are natural disasters, to which Indonesia is quite vulnerable, they extend a helping hand. In 2004, for example, many countries were hit by the tsunami. They assisted victims in Aceh and also built several houses for Sri Lankan families affected by the disaster. They also often give free medical assistance since medical care is very expensive in Indonesia.

Besides the Buddhist contribution to the country and society, the State in turn has given some support to Buddhism. When the Beautiful Indonesia Miniature Park (Taman Mini Indonesia Indah) was designed, the government included a miniature of Borobudur and a Buddhist monastery. The monastery was inaugurated on July 23, 1975 and handed over to Buddhists for its maintenance. In 1978, the government established the Ministry of Hindu and Buddhist Affairs. In 2006, it was separated from Ministry of Hindu Affairs and now functions independently.

Vesak has been celebrated since 1953 in Indonesia. However, the government did not participate in the event. It was only in 1994 that President Soeharto attended the Vesak celebration for the first time. His participation was regarded as a sign that the government treated all religions equally, without any discrimination.

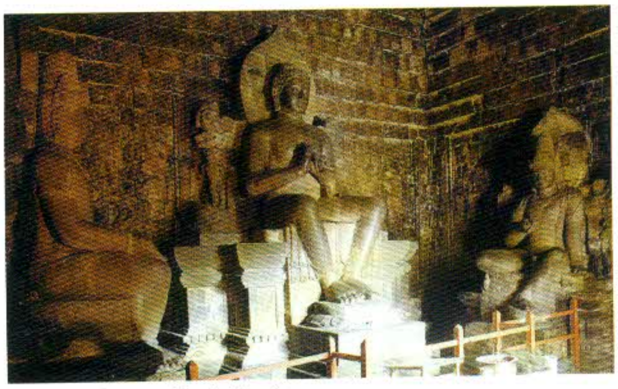
Recently, the government has been willing to assist every religion. Thus, Indonesian government grants fund teachers' pay of Sunday Dharma schools and includes such schools as a part of its program. Besides this, the government also sponsors temporary ordination programs. Since there are several sects conducting temporary ordination programs, the fund has to be distributed equally. In this regard, each sect is granted around US $3,000 - 4,000 annually.

Conclusion: the Future of Buddhism in Indonesia

Merchants were instrumental in introducing Buddhism to Indonesia. Then Ven. Gunavarman arrived and did groundbreaking work in the establishment of Buddhism. Due to his efforts, Buddhism became an official religion and attained glory for many centuries.

Due to unavoidable circumstances, Buddhism went into a deep slumber for about 500 years. However, this dormant period of Buddhism turned out to be a driving force for the revival of the religion in the 1930s, when Indonesians got the opportunity once more of following the Buddha's teaching. Nowadays, thousands of Buddhist monasteries are firmly established throughout the Indonesian archipelago. Various Buddhist activities such as Sunday Dharma schools, meditation programs, Dharma study groups, and temporary ordinations, are carried out by the young generation as well as the old. However, if these positive aspects are not guided properly, Buddhism could still go astray. Due to eagerness, different groups become selfish, arrogant and oppressive and obstructive towards other groups. Each group might think that it is the only one worthy to be called a true representative of Indonesian Buddhism. If such egoistic and selfish thinking continues to prevail, Buddhism will have no future in Indonesia, and will leave no trace or footprint. To assure a bright future for Buddhism, unity is what is most required; unity which promotes mutual cooperation. By doing so, Buddhism could match its ancient glory. This will also contribute to the progress and prosperity of the Indonesian nation.

Once this unity is achieved it will be possible to address the problem of poverty and education among Buddhists. Indonesia is rich in natural resources, but many families including Buddhists remain poor. It is necessary and possible to initiate programs to utilize available resources for the benefit and well-being of Buddhist families so that the problem of poverty could be at least alleviated.



Bodisathva Statues - Mendut Temple

Kalsan Temple

Notes

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Rwâneka dhâtu winuwus Buddha Wiswa,
Bhinnêki rakwa ring apan kena parwanosen,
Mangka ng Jinatwa kalawan Siwatatwa tunggal,
Bhinnêka tunggal ika tan hana dharma mangrwa.

It is said that the well-known Buddha and Shiva are two different substances. They are indeed different, yet how is it possible to recognise their difference in a glance, since the truth of Jina (Buddha) and the truth of Shiva is one. They are indeed different, but they are of the same kind, as there is no duality in Truth.

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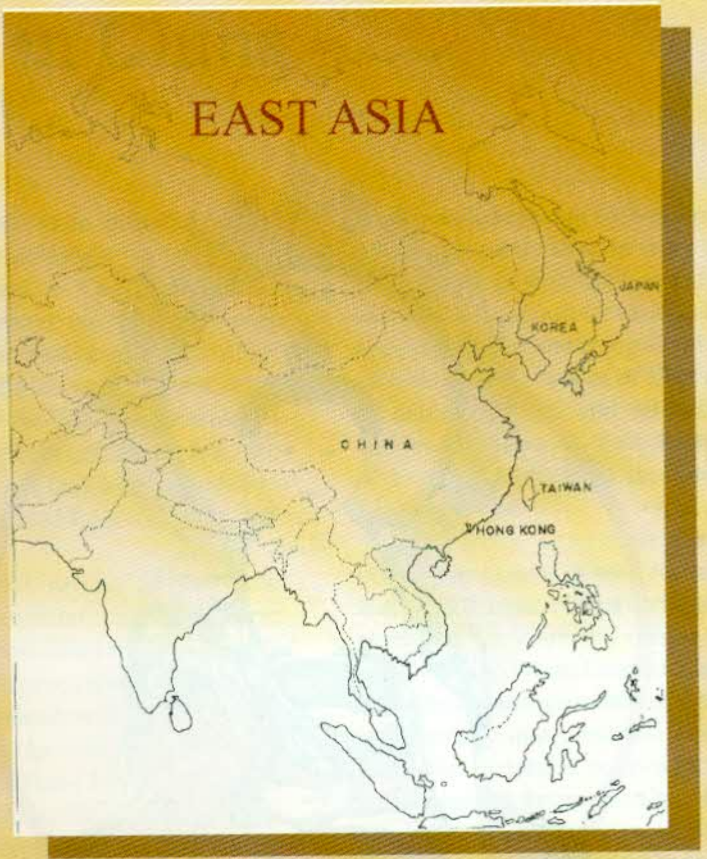
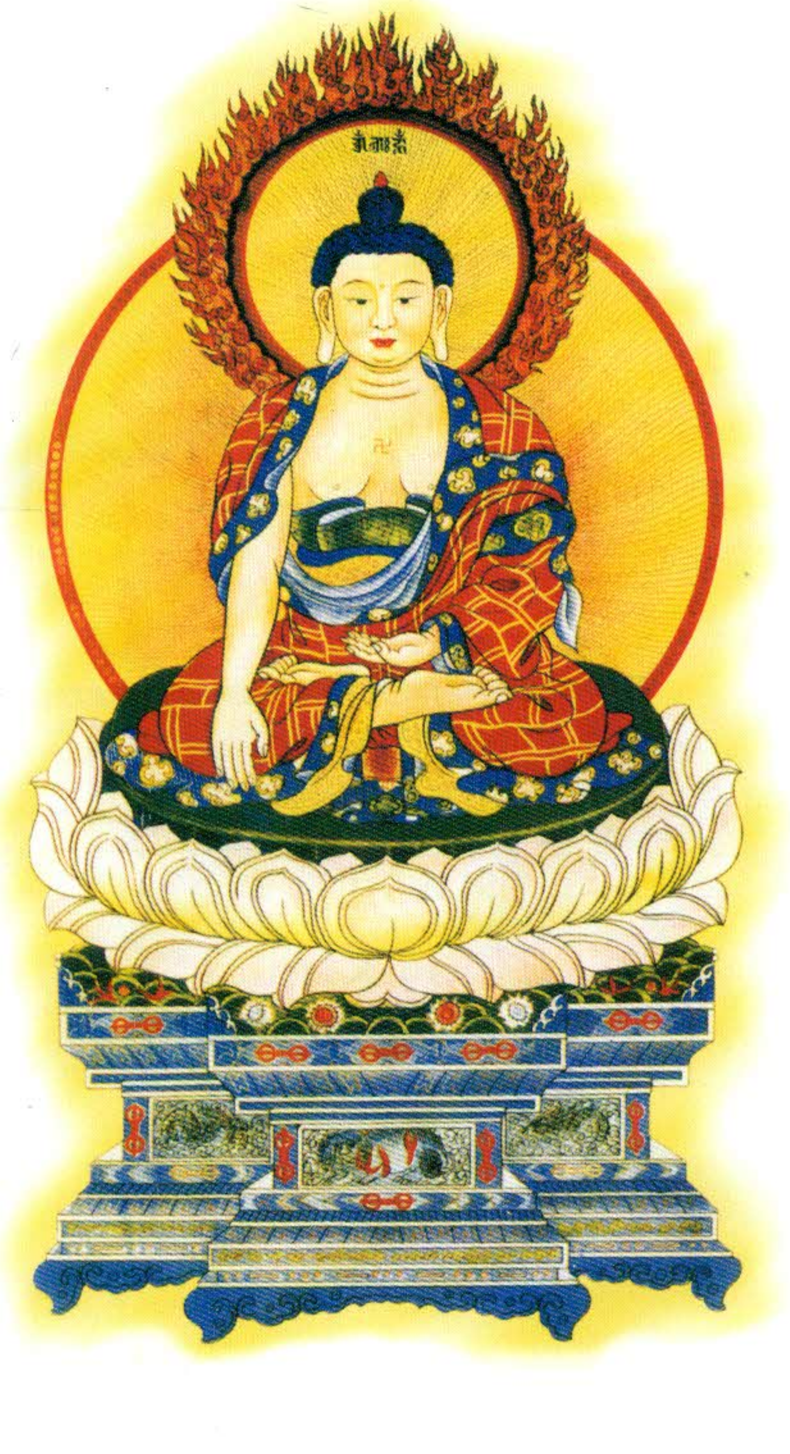


EAST ASIA

JAPAN
KOREA
CHINA
TAIWAN
HONG KONG

China
Taiwan
Hong Kong
Korea
Japan



ESSAY 17

Buddhism in China

Lawrence YK Lau (劉宇光)

Introduction

The main purpose of this essay is to provide a brief survey of Han-Chinese Buddhism's development after Buddhism was transmitted to Confucian China. The discussion is mainly focused on the intellectual and cultural dimensions of the tradition, though other aspects will be discussed briefly as well. On the other hand, I would prefer to leave the full-scale discussion about Tibetan Buddhism to overseas colleagues who are experts regarding the tradition, and let Tibetan Buddhism be discussed as a tradition separated from its East Asian counterpart.

This essay provides a brief review of the basic intellectual and religious orientation of Han-Chinese Buddhism, and examines how Buddhism was transmitted, integrated and transformed in Chinese culture. However, it is impossible to discuss all the details within such limited space; therefore, the essay will be focused on the following issues: the stages and pattern of Han-Chinese Buddhism, the basic characteristics of East Asian Buddhism, and Han-Chinese Buddhism's potential contribution to the modern scholarship of Buddhist Studies.

Basic Concepts

There are several terms used in different contexts to predicate Buddhist traditions in China. They are similar at first sight, but in fact they have substantial differences. A brief explanation of the significant difference between the content and context of these concepts is necessary.

The first concept is "Han-Chinese Buddhism" (漢傳佛教). This is a modern term invented by the academic circle of Buddhist Studies for research purposes to identify and to describe the series of unique intellectual, cultural, religious and language elements of a particular Buddhist tradition. It refers to the Buddhist traditions developed in traditional China. The written language of the text in this tradition is Chinese. The word "Han-Chinese" here is understood in a linguistic and cultural context, rather than an ethnic or political one. Its text is composed of two parts. The first part is the large number of Chinese translations of Buddhist texts originally written in Sanskrit and other classical languages of South- and Mid-Asia. The second part is another series of texts originally written in Chinese by Chinese monks and scholars.

There is another term, "East Asian Buddhism", which is an invented concept by Western academic circles. After it was commonly used in these circles it was translated into Chinese as 東亞佛教, and also adopted among Asian colleagues. It refers to various Buddhist traditions that were derived in and transmitted from China, eventually spreading to the whole of East Asia. There are a series of unique cultural and intellectual factors shared by various members of East Asian Buddhism that make it distinguishable from its counterparts in South and Southeast Asia.

"East Asian" is far more than a geographical concept that includes China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Vietnam. It is also used to predicate a series of intellectual and cultural elements. They are the unique components, which are mainly derived from Confucianism and Taoism. But after Buddhism was transmitted to China, these elements were also partially integrated into Buddhism. This integration let Indian Buddhism be revised, and the tension between Buddhism and the given value of the Chinese culture was also reduced. The revision, which took several centuries, meant the material received had to be re-ordered, doctrines re-organized, and text re-written. The term "East Asian Buddhism" is different from Han-Chinese Buddhism in the sense that for the latter it is a concept more about the written language than the text. Although the text is in Chinese, its doctrinal concern is closer to the Indian perspective rather than the Chinese perspective. While East Asian Buddhism is a cultural concept about a new form of Buddhism, Synthetization or Syntheticism is its main characteristic. The basic attitude of Syntheticism is that one thing in its essential status is not in contradiction with all the others, although as a phenomenon at the superficial level this concept may not seem to be so. Although various Buddhist traditions of the areas mentioned above will not be covered in this essay, the term "East Asian Buddhism" will be occasionally used.

Nowadays there is a commonly accepted, yet problematic Chinese term, the so-called "China's Buddhism" (中國佛教). This is a relatively new and confused concept: the term never occurred before the twentieth century. Traditionally, "China" is a concept referring to the social-cultural circles, the use of the Chinese character as the written language, and living according to the values of Confucianism. It is neither a geographical nor a political concept. However, after the Western concepts of "nationalism" and "nation state" were transmitted to China, the meaning of the idea "China" was transformed to an imagined political community and a politically-based geographical territory. Under these circumstances, the newly-invented idea "China's Buddhism" was a concept established according to the ideological need, rather than according to Buddhism. Superficially, the idea of "China's Buddhism" covers the Han-Chinese traditions, Tibetan tradition and the Pali (or Theravada) traditions of the Yunnan Province. But actually the hidden agenda is emphasizing the geographical location of the last two traditions is China's political territory. However, since it is an ideologically injected concept, the reality behind this political correctness is another matter. In the scholarship of Buddhist Studies in today's Mainland China, the other two traditions have rarely been discussed seriously as has Han-Chinese, although it is always stressed that, politically speaking, they are part of China. Therefore, due to the considerations described, instead of adopting the last term, I will use the terms Han-Chinese Buddhism and East Asian Buddhism.

A Brief History of Buddhism in China

Generally speaking, the history of Han-Chinese Buddhism is comprised of five stages. The first occurred, it is believed, before the second century CE, when Buddhists from various Mid-Asia countries arrived in China. This would suggest that this was the earliest transmission of Buddhism to China. However, although some researchers agree that an element related to Buddhism had arrived in China, so far direct evidence is still lacking to support the claim that Buddhism was transmitted to China as a live religion along with the complete institution, text and doctrine.

The second stage in the history of Chinese Buddhism, the reception period, occurred during the second and sixth centuries. Although the origin of Buddhism lies in India, the earliest transmission of Buddhism to China was mainly from countries in Mid-Asia situated along the Silk Road. At the very beginning, Buddhism was a religion merely for the foreign communities with a Mid-Asia background. Many of them consisted of merchants who traded in the northwest part of China and transmitted Buddhism to that area. Shortly after, Buddhist monks from various countries in Mid-Asia also arrived in China. The early Chinese perception of Buddhist monks was that they were nothing more than another group of religious-magicians similar to their Taoist counterparts. But later on, when the monk-scholars or Buddhist intellectuals from Mid-Asia or South-East Asia translated the Buddhist texts into Chinese, the preconception was shifted from religious Taoism to intellectual or philosophical Taoism; Buddhism was perceived as an intellectual system and a spiritual tradition that shared some similar elements as Taoism. The former perception was welcomed by the general population, while the latter was welcomed by the educated communities. Buddhist monastic communities (sangha) and monasteries are also established after the Vinaya Pitaka was translated and the ordination system was introduced. Many of these projects were financially and spiritually supported by the rulers. After different series of Buddhist texts were translated into Chinese, the intellectual circles among the monastic communities gradually formulated various scholarly groups to study them. Many devoted Buddhists came from the royal family and the noble class. During this period, a series of debates between Buddhists and Confucianists, especially the issues regarding the ethical norms related to social aspects and family life, always kept Buddhism under pressure. Nevertheless, this could not slow down the substantial growth and spread of Buddhism in Chinese society. Lay Buddhist groups devoted to the Pure Land faith or meditation practice had gone through extensive growth at this time.

The third period of Chinese Buddhism occurred between the sixth and eighth centuries alongside the Xu-Tang Dynasties in China. After nearly 400 years of transmission, the Chinese already had a comprehensive understanding of the various dimensions of Buddhism, as well as of the text, doctrine, practice and institution. The rule of the Xu-Tang Dynasties was the peak period in the history and culture of Chinese Buddhism. During these three centuries, different schools were founded in co-existence: Japanese scholars used the term "the co-existing of the eight schools". Some are closer to Indian traditions, while others are those called "East Asian Buddhism" by modern scholars; a new form of Buddhism had been established, a compound of Indian Buddhism and East Asian culture. The schools of Three Treatises (三論宗), are Vijnanavada (唯識宗) founded by Xuanzang (玄奘), and Vinaya and Tantra Buddhism, which are part of the former category. The schools of Three Treatises, founded by Ji Zang (吉藏), is perceived as the Chinese version of Madhyamika. On the other hand, Tian Tai (天臺宗), Hua-yen (華嚴宗), Chen (禪宗) and Pure Land (淨土宗) are the traditions generally perceived as the typical system of East Asian Buddhism. The most creative intellectuals over the centuries devoted themselves to either of the models of Chinese Buddhism.

During this period, both models were transmitted to Japan through Korea, which brought about a substantial cultural transformation in both countries.

Regarding the post-Xu-Tang period in the history of Chinese Buddhism - from the end of the eight century to the early twentieth century - scholars have different, even conflicting, attitudes regarding the division of the stages. Some scholars argue that this period of 1,200 years should be divided into two stages, namely, Song-Yuen (Mongolian) Dynasties and Ming-Qing (Manchurian) Dynasties, while others disagree. According to this theory, Chinese Buddhism was maintained during the Song-Yuen Dynasties but was totally neglected during the Ming-Qing Dynasties. But there is another group of scholars who believe that after the Tang Dynasty, Buddhism existed for a long period of time in China, but without much creativity, and then went through a chronic decline. Other than Chen Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism, all other Buddhist systems with a strong scholastic background are underdeveloped. For the former two traditions, seeking mystical intuition or experience of faith instead of scholarly learning is the core element in the spiritual practice of their traditions. Furthermore, during this period, various cults, which are normally called "folk Buddhism", were also extensively developed in Chinese society. Although their understanding and presentation of the Buddhist doctrine is perceived as distorted by mainstream Buddhism, it is impossible to deny the doctrinal connection between mainstream Buddhism and folk Buddhism.

The fifth and last period in the history of Chinese Buddhism is the modern stage, which started in the early twentieth century. Western power and culture made a strong impact on traditional Chinese society from the mid-nineteenth century. Chinese society as a whole went through a crisis of modernization, which was also a turning point for Chinese Buddhism in the sense that Buddhism was under extensive pressure from society and political authority, which strongly criticized Buddhism's "backwardness", "economic unproductiveness" and other aspects. The newly introduced nationalistic ideology of China blamed religion as one of the factors responsible for the country's failure in countering Western powers. Thus Buddhism also became the scapegoat for that failure. However, a substantial religious reformation of Chinese Buddhism occurred in the first half of the twentieth century.

The reformation covered nearly all the dimensions of Buddhism. It included the monastic institution and education, the relationship between the monastic-lay communities, the relationship between political authority and Buddhism, the adoption of the modern pattern of Buddhist Studies, the re-examination of traditional understanding of Buddhist doctrine through dialogue between Chinese Buddhism and its counterparts from South-East Asia, and Buddhist participation in social service.

The Current State of Buddhism in China

Buddhism in modern China during the Republican Period (1911-1949) also went through reformation. Unfortunately, this ceased in 1949 when the country was taken over by the Communists. The newly-born social-economical and political institution, along with its totalitarian ideology, perceived religion, Buddhism included, as nothing more than backward, superstitious and politically deceptive. The three decades between 1949 and 1979 was the peak period of ideological fanaticism in the country. Buddhism, along with all other religions, was the target to be eliminated, since religion is the enemy of the state according to the ideology. The impact on Buddhism from political authority was much more forceful than that which had arisen during the Republican Period. Monastic members were forced to resume secular life. Those who refused to do so were sent to concentration camps for re-education. Many of the Buddhist monasteries were confiscated and re-distributed among the people. All religious activities were under strict control, or even completely prohibited.

Although the harsh condition of ideology has been much reduced since the early 1980s, Buddhism in China is still faced with a series of other problems. It is too complicated to provide a full-scale analysis of the situation, but it is still necessary to provide at least two examples to illustrate the problem.

One of the main difficulties is the monastic members' quality of education. In today's China, there are a handful of Buddhist seminaries, which are under the supervision of the National Office of Religious Affairs. However, most of the teaching staff rarely receives formal academic training in Buddhist Studies, while the average educational background of most students in the seminaries is quite weak. The academic qualifications of the program are not recognized by any university in China. For a monastic individual, after he spends several years receiving Buddhist education from a seminary, is not allowed to continue advanced study at university, since the certificate offered by the National Office of Religious Affairs is accepted neither by the Department of Education nor all the 2,000 universities of the country under the department's supervision. If a contrast is made between the Buddhist education of Mainland China and that of Taiwan, we can easily understand the difference. The training of the monastic member in Mainland China is totally discontinuous with the mainstream education of society, thus, the seminary graduates are unable to understand what a modern civil society is and in what way a modern religious organization can best contribute to the society. In Taiwan, there is large number of young monastic members received under- and post-graduate education along with lay communities. Although many of them did go through basic religious training at a Buddhist seminary, their further education is mostly received from the mainstream universities. Therefore, they share a common part of their educational background with the mainstream community, though they still can keep their unique element of being a monastic individual.

Another problem that Buddhism in China currently faces is the uncertain monastic identity and social role of a Buddhist monastery. Since the early 1980s, Communist China has experienced economic reformation. Other than industry, within the last decade tourism gradually became another important economic area of the on-going expansion. The administrative authorities at the local level, who are responsible for tourism, recruit unemployed personal from society to manage a Buddhist-like locus. These individuals are required to dress as a monastic member, yet without education, faith and knowledge of Buddhism, while the Buddhist-like locus is under the supervision of the Department of Tourism at the local level, rather than that of the Office of Religious Affairs. Similar phenomena extensively occurred throughout the country and confused both true believers of Buddhism and non-Buddhists. For the communities of the true believers in Buddhism, clarification is extremely difficult, while for mainstream society the image or their understanding of Buddhism is always confused.

Although it cannot be denied that Buddhism in China has been undergoing a process of revival within the last two decades, due to the complicated factors described above, so far there is no clear picture as to whether any "Buddhist school" and unique practice has been revived in its strict sense.

Observation of the Future

Among the five "legal" and main religions, Han-Chinese Buddhism is the one that has achieved the best trust and support from authority. This is partially due to authority's attitude to religion being shifted from ideological extremism to political pragmatism, thus the idea (and the ideal) of eliminating the "backward" religion is explicitly given up. Although the reality of religion's long-term existence is accepted by authority, how close the political connection between authority and the various religions depends on the political need of the government. Authority is still the key element to mold the relationship. Han-Chinese Buddhism is perceived as the "favorite child" among all other "legal" religious traditions, since Han-Chinese Buddhism has became one of the main elements in traditional Chinese culture and society, more experienced at fitting itself into Han-Chinese society than any other tradition. Furthermore, Han-Chinese Buddhism is a key means for current authority to counter the extensive and growing religious influence from illegal folk Buddhism, Taiwanese Han-Chinese Buddhism (along with its modern value with a background related to civil society), various Christian traditions (which are close to the Western world), Tibetan Buddhism and Islamic tradition. This is especially the case among the Han-Chinese population. Furthermore, authority's support of Han-Chinese Buddhism may also indirectly strengthen its unofficial diplomatic relationship with various Buddhist countries in Southeast Asia. Therefore, the growth of the visible and invisible influence of Han-Chinese Buddhism in mainland society is expected in the future, although whether this is a useful way to improve its quality is doubtful.

There is another phenomenon, which has also attracted extensive attention: the rapid commercialization of Buddhism within the last two decades. Many of today's Buddhist organizations in mainland China run their religious business affairs in a very successful way, partially because today's China is a society lacking, but seeking for, basic moral value, due to all traditional values being eroded for several decades. The revenue turnover of many Buddhist organizations is extremely large, but authority's regulating system of NGOs or NPOs is far behind the development of social reality. In contemporary China, religious organizations are still not allowed to run any independent group or charity, or provide services in medical health, education and social welfare. Many Buddhist organizations generated large cash flows without sufficient transparent and effective supervision. This situation has exposed Han-Chinese Buddhism to the risk of serious corruption. It's a hot topic, which has puzzled the lay Buddhist community, mainstream society, and Mainland China's academic circle of Buddhist Studies.

Mapping Han-Chinese Buddhism

There are three major living Buddhist traditions according to the language used in their texts -Pali, Chinese and Tibetan - respectively located in the South-East, East, and parts of the interior of Asia. They can be treated as the religious inheritor of Indian Buddhism at different periods, although the historical details would be far more complicated than this simple matching. Pali Buddhism is the inheritor of so-called Early Buddhism, which covers Primitive Buddhism and part of Sectarian Buddhism in India during the sixth to second centuries BCE. Han-Chinese Buddhism and East Asian Buddhism is the inheritor of traditions in Sectarian Buddhism and the Early Mahayana of India during the second century BCE until the sixth century CE, while the Tibetan tradition is the inheritor of the middle and late period of the Mahayana Tradition (its full-blown esoteric form is also included) in India from the sixth to eleventh centuries CE.

There are a couple of important basic factors concerning the early transmission of Buddhism. First, Confucian China was a rare example in the history of the transmission of Buddhism beyond India to other Asian countries, in that Buddhism encountered an already complicated system and a sophisticated civilization ready to re-shape the teaching received, according to its orientation.

Second, Buddhism was transmitted to China in multiple ways, geographically and culturally speaking. Therefore, the doctrines and text received are diversified: various interpretations can be found in China.

What Had Been Translated

With the mapping of the historical connection between various periods of Indian Buddhism and the three living Buddhist traditions, it is possible to examine the following questions related to the Chinese Buddhist Tripitaka:

A. What are the main categories of Buddhist text translated into Chinese? Compared with two other living traditions, what is the unique collection, and what is lacking in the Chinese Buddhist Tripitaka?
B. Which types of text are given weight to in East Asian Buddhism among her various schools, and how are they different from other Buddhist traditions (e.g. Tibetan Buddhism) regarding the choice or attitude to the same group of texts?
C. Which types of text are ignored by the East Asian traditions, disregarding its significance in Indian Buddhist Philosophy?

The following are the main categories of Buddhist texts that have been translated into Chinese, which is in *Taisho shinshū dai zokyo,* Volume 1-33:

1. Five Agamas of Early Buddhism
2. Abhidharma treatises in Sectarian Buddhism, while the seven Sarvastivada treatises under the title of "one body (*eka-kaya*) and six feet (*sas-pada*)" are included
3. Early Mahayana sutras. (There are two main intellectual traditions in Mahayana Buddhism.)
4. The series of philosophical treatises (sastra) of Yogacara-Vijnanavadian
5. The series of philosophical treatises of Early Indian Madhyamika

Compared with the Pali Tripitaka of Theravada Buddhism the Five Agamas are equal to the Nikayas in the Pali Tripitaka, with a few exceptions. The major volume of the seven Theravada treatises is lacking in the Chinese Tripitaka. However, the Pali Tripitaka is lacking the complete Sarvastivada treatises and nearly all materials of Mahayana tradition.

When comparing the Chinese Tripitaka with its Tibetan counterparts, the Tengyur and Kangyur, the commonly shared categories of text between the two traditions are the sections on the Mahayana sutras, Yogacara-Vijnanavadian sastras and early Madhyamika sastras. The Chinese Tripitaka is totally lacking in three categories, the Vajra-yana text, the two series of sastras from Buddhist Logic-Epistemology (Hetu-vidya and Prama avada), and the later Madhyamik of Mahayana Buddhism. Although there are some hetuvidya-Prama avada and Madhyamik treatises in the Chinese Tripitaka, their number and significance is much less than that of the Tibetan Tripitaka. However, the Tibetan Tripitaka is lacking most of, if not all, the text of early Buddhism, which is preserved both in the Pali and Chinese Tripitaka. Both Agamas and Abhidharmas (*Abhidharmakosa* is the exception) of various traditions in Sectarian Buddhism are not preserved in the Tibetan Tripitaka

Second, although there are more than thirty-three volumes of Chinese text in *Taisho shinshu dai zokyo*, not all of them are treated by Han-Chinese Buddhists with equal weight of significance. In fact among these thirty-three volumes, only a very limited number can be perceived by Han-Chinese Buddhists as having value. Furthermore, different schools or traditions would give weight to different groups of text.

Generally speaking, the various traditions of Han-Chinese Buddhism fall into two types. The first is the Buddhist schools that embrace the Indian tradition. Typical examples are the several scholastic circles of *Abhidharmakosa, Dasabhumi-sutra-sastra, Mahayanasaṃgraha-sastra, Satyasiddhi-sastra* and *Abhidharmaihṛdaya-sastra* during the fourth and sixth centuries, the early period after Buddhism was transmitted to China. Later on, both the Chinese Madhyamika, namely, the School of the *Three Treatises* (三論宗) in the sixth century and the Chinese School of Consciousness (Vijnanavada) in the seventh century, are also included. The teaching at these schools relied mainly on Indian sastras or Abhidharmas, but much less on the Mahayana sutras. They are considered as the Chinese branches of their Indian counterpart.

The second type is the Buddhist schools often labelled as "East Asian Buddhism". They embrace the Buddhist traditions said to be the form of Buddhism that had integrated a series of East Asian intellectual and spiritual elements into the Buddhist system, and make it clearly distinguishable from the Indian traditions. The scholastic circle of *Mahaparinirvaṇa*, Pure Land, Tiantai Buddhism, Huayan Buddhism and Zen Buddhism are typical examples of East Asian Buddhism. Different from the first type of Buddhism in China and the Tibetan counterpart, East Asian Buddhism teaching relied more on various sutras. They do not just downplay or ignore, but also explicitly deny and strongly resist the role of sastras played in the learning of Buddhist doctrine. This is a unique phenomenum that should not be overlooked or ignored. In the Pali and Tibetan traditions, the role of Abhidharma and sastra in the monastic education would rarely be overridden by other genre of religious literature. Especially in the scholastic traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, the Mahayana sutra is simply not included in the monastic curriculum.

Since the distinction between sastra and sutra is more or less related to the differences among various models of Han-Chinese Buddhism, it is necessary to present a concise review of the differences between the two genres of Buddhist literature. Sutra is the unique genre of religious literature in Mahayana Buddhism. In contrast with another genre of Buddhist literature, Abhidharma or sastra, sutra has series of unique characteristics that are different from the latter's. The major content in most, if not all, sutras is narration. They are stories composed of plot, role, character and concrete event; sometimes it may be exciting and dramatic, although in many cases it isn't. The repetition of the plot, and even the verbal expression with just slight revision, is a regular arrangement in many sutras. Sutra always delivers its message more through metaphor, myth, dialogue or drama, rather than argumentation. The format of expression in sutra is much less technical than that of the sastra. Philosophical technical terms may be impossible to totally avoid, but it is much less than that in sastra. With many sutras, it is quite common that the author is anonymous or simply unknown, since the work always goes through a long period of repeated editing by various editors of different backgrounds. This rarely happened in Abhidharma or sastra, for most examples the author is clearly identifiable; the uncertainty of authorship is much less than that of a sutra. Considering the various conditions related to a sutra, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the target audience is the Buddhist lay community, rather than the monastic community, which is assumed by most Buddhist traditions as the religious educated elite. Normally the core message that a sutra delivered is expressed in a way much more simple and concise, and sometime even more straightforward, than that of the sastras. The emphasis of the content of a sutra is more on ethical and spiritual issues than epistemological or ontological ones.

When the Mahayana sutra appeared in the history of Indian Buddhism, its status was continually challenged by traditionalists. Before it achieves general acceptance among the Buddhist majority, it goes through a long period of controversy within Buddhism regarding to its authority. However, although these cannot stop Mahayana sutra's success in canonization, and thus became a significant component of the Buddhist Tripitaka, how it is handled by various later traditions is quite diversified and complicated.

The sastras expose their theme not just in scholastic ways, but also philosophical ways, in which sophisticated conceptual distinction and logical argumentation is the normal form of presentation. Various issues, religiously or philosophically related, are presented in an abstract but precise way. Apparently, the only target audience for the carefully articulated terminologies, complicated reasoning and sophisticated theory that is presented in the sastra is the scholastic circle of the monasteries. The main content of the sastra is the theory (darshana) and five branches of sciences (panca-vidya). Not just philosophical and theological issues from logic-epistemology, ontology, soteriology and philosophy of language are covered, but other branches of systematic knowledge such as medical science, linguistics, the astronomical-astrological complex, fine arts and performing arts, literature and poems.

The typical East Asian Buddhist traditions always ignore the entire series of sastra because they are not interested in the format and the content. However, the founders or key figures of the traditions always replace the sastra with the commentaries on the particular Mahayana sutra. These commentaries were written in Chinese and took over the role that sastra played in the Indian context, although no matter what the format or content, sastra is not similar to these commentaries.

Regarding the possible reason that the scholastic Chinese Buddhist traditions made way for the non-scholastic traditions such as Pure Land and Chen Buddhism, much of modern Chinese scholarship suggests that this is due to so-called "Chinese ethnic character" that prefers intuition rather than playing complex logical games with words and concepts. However, this answer is too vague to explain anything concretely. In ancient civilization, scholastic tradition can't be maintained for a long period of time without back-up from authority. The scholastic tradition can't be easily sustained unless the tradition is adopted by authority as the national or official ideology, and the scholastic tradition becomes part of the official institution of knowledge. In traditional China, although some members of the royal family (sometimes even the emperor) or the nobles devoted themseves to Buddhism, thus supporting Buddhism, it was more a personal decision rather than policy at the national or official level. Nearly all scholastic Buddhist traditions were sponsored by an emperor or other individual from the royal family. For example, Tiantai Buddhism was sponsored by Emperor Sui Yangdi (隋煬帝), Huayan Buddhism by Empress Wu Ze Tian (武則天), and Chinese Vijnanavada by Emperor Tang Taizong (唐太宗), etc. However, if the emperor was perceived by the Confucian civil servant as "addicted to Buddhism", he would most likely be under substantial pressure from the government. There is no doubt that all the representative scholastic Buddhist traditions in China of the Tang Dynasty were supported by individuals of the royal family, but it should not be confused as being supported by the government or that Buddhism became the basic principle of the empire's ideological policy. Confucianism, rather than Buddhism, is the the only official ideology in China. Thus, the scholastic system existed, fully developed, in ancient China, as part of a Confucianism institution, but not as a Buddhist institution.

Syntheticism is one of the main characteristics in East Asian Buddhism. First, there is Matching Box in the early interpretation of Buddhist doctrine. When Buddhism was transmitted to China in the second century, it was understood by Chinese as being nothing more than the doctrine of another group of magicians similar to that of Taoism. But later on in the third and fourth centuries, when a particular type of Buddhist text and doctrine called Prajna-paramita was introduced into China, its idea of emptiness (sunyata) was absorbed by Chinese Buddhist intellectuals through the glass of the philosophical concept of "nothingness" (無) from Taoism. The philosophical tradition of Neo-Taoism during the fourth century is the most creative system, highly-regarded among the educated class. The similarity between Emptiness and Nothingness at the superficial level at least allowed the Buddhist intellectual tradition to draw the Chinese intellectual community's attention. However, understanding other intellectual traditions by Matching Box may be unavoidable at the very beginning of the encounter between two cultures, but a price is paid due to the distortion of philosophical precision. Although in Buddhism and Taoism the ideas of Emptiness and Nothingness can be understood as the very nature of the world, Emptiness never plays the role of being the ontological source or the origin of the world as Nothingness does in Taoism. Thus, after the understanding of Emptiness is coloured by Nothingness, it takes a discussion among Buddhist intellectuals to clarify the idea. Whether the side-effect of Matching Box during the early transmission of Prajna thought is completely removed is still a debatable topic in modern scholarship.[1]

Second, during the early period when Buddhism was transmitted to China, other than the Prajna series of texts, another important series of Buddhist texts, which was highly regarded by the Chinese, is that of Buddha Nature, or Tathagata-garbha. Since this was introduced to China at the peak period of East Asian Buddhism in China's Tang Dynasty, it was one of the most emphasized ideas of Chinese Buddhists. Modern scholarship commonly agrees that such an emphasis, culturally speaking, is the outcome of the influence of Confucianism. Confucianism has a belief that "everyone can become a sage"; the belief is so strong in Chinese culture that no other attitude regarding the issue is accepted. In the Indian Mahayana tradition, this is neither an important issue that all intellectual traditions must be interested in, nor is there any common agreement about the conclusion reached among various schools. The issue is so marginal in Indian Buddhism that it is almost without a single sastra explicitly focused on the issue. The handful of texts devoted to the topic are sutras, thus neither Madhyamika nor Yogacara-Vijnanavada would treat it as an important issue that can stand alone.

But in China, nearly all schools present their understanding of Buddha Nature. This question is composed of several sub-issues.

The first is about the universality of Buddha Nature, whether all beings share the equal quality of soteriological potentiality, thus whether all beings can achieve Enlightenment. Although different understandings still exist among various traditions, all schools (except one, see following) would explicitly agree that, principally speaking, all beings have the equal potential capability for spiritual cultivation and the final achievement of Enlightenment. It is said that even the old model of Chinese Vijnanavada and quasi-Madhyamika are also compatible with the theory of Tathagata-garbha. One of the handful of exceptional positions on this problem is Xuanzang's system. His doctrine of five gorta has the idea of the Incorrigible (icchantika). Beings under the category of Incorrigible are those who commit particular types of serious moral mistakes. Thus, the effect derived from the above became the insurmountable obstruction for spiritual cultivation and Enlightenment. From the perspective of various East Asian Buddhist traditions that uphold the Buddha Nature theory, Xuanzang's soteriological doctrine is theoretically untenable, for it does not promise or guarantee the spiritual potentiality, the Buddha Nature, which is supposed to be shared universally by all beings.

The second problem about the potentiality and actuality of the Buddha Nature is that some traditions among those who uphold the theory took a further step to push the doctrine forwards. For most schools, Buddha Nature is nothing more than a concept of potential ability to achieve a spiritual or soteriological end. However, several schools adopted a more radical position and suggested that this is not a concept about potentiality. Rather, it should be understood as a concept about the already fully-achieved spiritual ability called Original Enlightenment. In fact this radical model is one of the major theories of East Asian Buddhism, although it is highly controversial within the tradition. It implicated a debatable issue. Logically speaking, the theory tried to argue that Buddha Nature is an actuality rather than merely a potentiality, and why most, if not all, beings are still trapped by misconception (avidya). The premise that all beings had already achieved full Enlightenment would imply a morally confused conclusion. Since they are already enlightened, they are supposed be moral and correct, but how should the wrongdoing in the reality be understood? The doctrine is trapped in the dilemma of Buddhist version of theodicy. This premise would let religion be exposed to the risk of removing the necessary distance, and the tension then caused, between the reality and the ideal.

The third problem about Buddha Nature is whether it can also exist in non-life beings. Among the East Asian traditions that uphold the Buddha Nature theory, most of them would generally agree that no matter whether Buddha Nature is a potentiality or actuality, it can only be applied to life beings. However, there is an exception; Tiantai Buddhism suggests that Buddha Nature can also exist in non-life beings. Therefore, plants, wood, tile or stone all have Buddha Nature, thus eventually can achieve Enlightenment. For most Buddhist traditions, Buddha Nature is a soteriological concept, but Tiantai Buddhism revised it as a ontological concept and transformed the doctrine to be a Buddhist version of quasi-pantheism or semi-pantheism.

The third aspect of the Syntheticism in East Asian Buddhism is in its Classification of Teachings, the synthetization that can be found in the Classification of Buddhist Teachings. The many sources of Han-Chinese Buddhism provided a rich yet contradictory picture of Buddhism to the early Chinese practitioners no matter what the understanding of doctrine or spiritual practice. Therefore, for Chinese Buddhist intellectuals during the fifth century, how to harmonize the tension among various teachings became a significant task for the further development of Buddhism in China. Although Mahayana Buddhism in India already had the idea of arranging the sequence of various Buddhist doctrines according to certain theoretical concerns, it has rarely been a core issue in the doctrine and has not been presented in a systematic way. It may be partially due to the disagreement with each other, and the ongoing debate, rather than the removal of the tension between doctrines, which is a normal way to handle the intellectual conflict in Indian traditions, no matter within Buddhism or that between Buddhism and other traditions.

However, this is not the Han-Chinese Buddhism attitude. It may be influenced by Chinese culture, the Chinese Buddhism tendency to harmonize the doctrinal incoherence, although theoretically speaking, whether the philosophical outcome is successful is always another story. Begun by the early scholarly circles of the fourth century, the theory of Classification of Teachings (判教) became a necessary component in all Buddhist scholastic traditions. Most of them are presented in a highly systematic and sophisticated way. The theory is always described within the metaphor of a series of spiritual stages on the path that a practitioner supposedly experiences in his spiritual cultivation. By this method, the incoherence among various Buddhist doctrines is claimed to be removed. The claim is based on the argument that different teachings are taught according to the spiritual need of the practitioner at the various levels on the path of cultivation. Therefore, each particular system of Buddhist teaching has its target audience. Furthermore, the theory of the Classification of Teachings is always closely connected to the highest or the most ultimate teaching of a particular school; how the various Buddhist doctrines are classified is directly derived from what system of Buddhist doctrine is emphasized by the particular school. Therefore, a particular school of the Classification of Teachings reflects that school's unique and core understanding of Buddhism.

Nearly all the major schools claim that the incoherence among the texts and various doctrines during the early period of Han-Chinese Buddhism can be successfully removed by the Classification of Teachings. However, the situation is more complicated. Since different schools have different theories and methods to handle the incoherence among the early texts, in many cases their outcome intensified and complicated the tension. That is due to the incoherence being upgraded and always recurrent among various theories of the Classification of Teachings. Therefore, what the Classification of Teachings can be really expected to do is to delay the outbreak or displace the tension, but not able to solve it in a strict sense.

A similar doctrine to the Classification of Teachings can also be found in other Buddhist traditions, for example, the doxographical system (*grub mtha'i rnam bzhag*) in Tibetan Buddhism. Regarding the arrangement of the various components in Buddhism to reduce the theoretical tensions among various schools, they have similar difficulties as their Chinese counterparts. Nevertheless, there are still substantial differences between the Chinese Classification of Teachings and the Tibetan doxography. While Chinese Vijnanavada may be an exception, in most of the Han-Chinese Classification of Teachings, although various Indian sastras and darshanas are covered, the major target or the core material that the Classification of Teachings is expected to handle is the Mahayana sutra, the Indian sastras and darshanas of various schools in Sectarian Buddhism, Yogacara-Vijnanavada and Madhyamika are always defined as teachings at the elementary or middle level. The series of Mahayana sutras adopted by typical East Asian Buddhist schools are always at the top of the Classification of Teachings. Furthermore, these schools greatly regard a particular Mahayana sutra due to one of their East Asian interpretations. For example, the *Saddharmapundarika sutra* is greatly regarded in Tiantai Buddhism's Classification of Teachings, not because of the *Saddharmapundarika sutra* itself, but because of the particular interpretation, which is provided in the commentaries written by the founder of Tiantai Buddhism. During the Tang Dynasty there was a series of Mahayana sutras emphasized by various traditions from different perspectives. Each of these schools would provide its own interpretation and commentaries. These different understandings are always under a competitive relation. *Saddharmapundarika sutra* is a typical example, in that all schools would write commentaries on it. But in the Tibetan Buddhist doxography, the Mahayana sutras have never been an issue.

The last aspect of Syntheticism in East Asian Buddhism is the synthetical attitude to the Three Teachings of China. During the period when Buddhism was introduced to China, the country had a fully established political-social institution and sophisticated civilization, therefore the Chinese selectively absorbed Buddhism, rather than adopted it as a whole, which other countries did when they encountered Buddhism. On the other hand, Buddhism also needed to revise itself to fit in an environment that already had another institution and a fully established culture, thus it was impossible for Buddhism to be the mainstream culture or dominant ideology of the society.

Before Buddhism was introduced to China, Confucianism was the official ideology of the empire: indeed the educated community shared the basic ideal of Confucianism. Furthermore, the educated class also appreciated the Taoist intellectual tradition. For the Chinese, these two systems are perceived as mutually compatible, rather than contradictory. Buddhism went through a long period before it integrated itself into this frame and the Three Teachings, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, were gradually formed. Buddhism's relative harmonious, though subordinated, relationship with Confucianism, earned it the space to exist in China.

However, after the Tang Dynasty, this pattern did cause Buddhism to pay the price of downplay her role in public life and intellectual (especially scholastic) aspect. When the peak period of Chinese Buddhism during the Tang Dynasty was over, only Pure Land and Chan Buddhism developed, but neither emphasized scholastic learning. As many modern scholars have pointed out, for Chan and Pure Land Buddhism, their understanding of Enlightenment was somehow partially shifted from ethical engagement to aesthetical experience, community committed practice to personal spirituality. Furthermore, scholarly learning was replaced by the mystical experience of intuition and faith.

Religious-Intellectual Contribution of Han-Chinese Buddhism

After Han-Chinese Buddhism was fully formulated and transformed as typical East Asian Buddhism, other traditions or dimensions of Han-Chinese Buddhist were always ignored or "forgotten", because it was somehow overridden by East Asian Buddhism. This was a loss for Buddhism as a whole. It is impossible to list the contributions of each forgotten factor here, however, it is still worth pointing out two examples.

The first is Sectarian Buddhism, an important component that linked Early Buddhism and Mahayana. It is important in the sense that although the basic doctrine and most of the technical terms that various schools of Sectarian Buddhism applied are derived from Early Buddhism, its scholastic tradition had already begun to investigate problems that later became the core issues in Mahayana Buddhism. But the difficulty is that nowadays other than Theravadan text still preserved in the Pali Tripitaka, the texts of nearly all schools of Sectarian Buddhism are preserved neither in Sanskrit and Pali nor Tibetan. However, at least in the case of Sarvastivada, almost the complete series of text is preserved in the Chinese Tripitaka. Xuanzang (玄奘), the founder of Chinese Vijnanavada, is renowned for being the translator of Mahayana texts in the Yogacara-Vijnanavada tradition, thus his contribution to Vijnanavada always overshadows the effort he made concerning Sectarian Buddhism. But in fact his contribution to the transmission of Sectarian Buddhism is at least as much as if not more than that for Chinese Vijnanavada. According to *Taisho shinshu dai zokyo*'s editorial arrangement of the text, the volume of the Yogacara-Vijnanavada texts translated by him is around 1,000 pages. However in *Taisho*, the total volume for Xuanzang's version of Sarvastivada text included is around 2,500 pages, which is close to 2.5 times of the Vijnanavada work also translated by him. The majority of the Sectarian, especially the Sarvastivada, volumes in the Chinese Tripitaka were translated by Xuanzang. They include Katyayaniputra's *Abhidharma-jnanaprasthana-sastra*, Sariputra's *Abhidharma-samgiti-paryaya-pada*, Mahamaudgalyayana's *Abhidharma-dharmaskandha-pada-sastra*, Devakema's *Abhidharma-Vijnana-kaya-pada-sastra*, Vasumitra's *Abhidharma-dhatu-kaya-pada-sastra* and *Abhidharma-prakaraṇa-pada, Abhidharma-mahavibhasa-sastra*, Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosa*, Skandhila's *Abhidharmavatara*, Sarvastivadin Sanghabhadra's *Nyayanusara* and *Abhidharma-samayapradipika*, etc.

The second example is the various Chinese traditions of Yogacara-Vijnanavada. Paul Griffiths has pointed out that East Asian Buddhism is the Buddhist tradition with the richest resource in Yogacara. Other than the modern Japanese scholarship of this research area, the traditional scholastic literature written in Chinese is also the main group of material that Griffiths' remark referred to, although this rich resource has not yet been fully realized by modern scholarship[2]. Xuanzang's translation of Vijnanavada provided the Chinese version of the whole series of Yogacara sastra. *Samdhinirmocana-sutra*, *Yogacarabhumi-sastra, Madhyanta-vibhaga, Madhyanta-vibhaga-tika, Mahayana-sutra-ala kara, Prakaranasyavaca-sastra, Mahayanasamgraha-sastra, Mahayana-samgrahopanibandhana, Mahayanabhidharma-samuccaya, Mahayanabhidharma-samuccaya-vyakhya, Buddhabhumi-sutra-sastra, Vimsatika, Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa, Trimsika and Alambanapariksavrtti*, etc., are included.

However, the Han-Chinese Buddhist contribution to Yogacara is far more than just Xuanzang's translation. Yogacara Buddhism was introduced to China by scholars of various doctrinal backgrounds. Therefore, Chinese Yogacara was formulated through three different waves during the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries respectively. The systems transmitted by Ratnamati and Paramartha are called "old translation". Their followers formed the scholastic circles of *Dasabhumi-sutra-sastra* and that of *Mahayanasamgraha-sastra*. Xuanzang's Vijnanavada is called the "new translation". A pair of terms, the system of the "true mind" and that of "false mind", are used to provide a contrast between the old and the new translations.

After the traditions were received, throughout the history of East Asian Buddhism attention was repeatedly drawn to the contrast between models of Yogacara due to their competitive interpretations on a series of issues. This contrast becomes the fundamental complex that has always re-surfaced on the horizon of the East Asian scholarship of Yogacara.

A similar contrast is not totally lacking in the Sanskrit and Tibetan traditions of Yogacara. In Sanskrit traditions, nirakara-vijnanavada and sakara-vijnanavada are the two terms used to indicate the similar distinction made between two models within Yogacara. In the Tibetan tradition, true-aspect (rnam bden pa) and false aspect (rnam brdzun pa) are the terms that are applied by the doxography (grub mtha'i rnam bzhag) to predicate the two sub-models within Vijnanavada. But the perspective and way that the Han-Chinese addressed the issue is still different from that of their Indian and Tibetan colleagues. Both pairs of Sanskrit and Tibetan terms suggested that the distinction between the two sub-models is based on epistemological and ontological concerns, which is about the ontological status of the intended object (alambana) of consciousness. Although the Indian and the Tibetan outcome of grouping the main figures of the two sub-models of Vijnanavada is not essentially different to that of the Chinese tradition, the terms applied in Chinese are the true mind and the false mind. This clearly indicated that, instead of being focused on object as with other traditions, Han-Chinese's terminologies are focused on the distinction of the mentality of the cognizer between the ordinary mind and wisdom from the enlightened level. Apparently this contrast is drawn according to the soteriological agenda, instead of the epistemological one, which is focused on the object.

There are two types of doctrinal differences between the various models of East Asian Yogacara. The first type is of sharp contrast in viewpoint among various models regarding to a series of topics or issues. They provide a competitive, but may be conflicting, solution for the same series of questions. The second type is the series of issues without explicit contrast, since it is addressed by merely one of them, without a competitive position. The following series of issues are selected distinctions between the old and new models of Yogacara Buddhism.

First, there is a different understanding about the Vijnanavada concept of the Evolution of Consciousness (vijnana-parinama). The old model is said to be a "mild" one, in the sense that the concept is applied to explain the continuity of experience about the "sequential causation". Whether object projection was also implied by this concept is indecisive. The grammatical formulation of the complex Sanskrit noun vijnana-parinama can be read either according to karma-dharaya or tat-purusa. The former would have the concept be understood as "consciousness as in evolution", namely, the seeds (bija) in the store-consciousness (Alaya-vijnana) are going through continued evolution without the processing of object construction. For the later, which is said to be the new model's understanding, it is "evolution of consciousness"; both temporal causation and object causation are implied in the concept. The object construction, the object causation between subject and object, is understood as the main aspect of the evolution of consciousness (vijnana-parinama)[3]. Another aspect of the above contrast is what way and in what degree the object is related to the subject. Another way to ask the same question is regarding the ontological status of the object. The question is about whether the intended object (alamabana) is mistakenly imagined through discrimination and attachment (parikalpita-svabhava) as the old model suggested, or dependence upon others (paratantra-svabhava), according to Xuanzang [4].

Xuanzang suggested that there are four folds in consciousness: the cognizer (darsana-bhaga), the intended object of consciousness (alambana), self-recognition (svasamvitti) and the recognition of self-recognition (svasamvitti-samvitti). Xuanzang claimed that the theory of four-fold consciousness is derived from Dignaga, although whether he really had such a three-fold theory is problematic [5].

It was said that the eight consciousnesses, especially store-consciousness, were emphasized by Xuanzang's system. Chinese interpretation of the main theme of Vijnanavadian, or consciousness-only (*wei-shih,* in Chinese), is said to be more focused on the Sanskrit term vijnana (consciousness), rather than vijnapti-matra (representation-only or conceptualization-only). These two terms' philosophical meaning is different. Vijnapti is the subject-object relationship, which is built up by the consciousness' cognitive activity. The object cannot be separated from the subject, yet it is also different from the subject. But vijnana is the cognitive faculties of the subject.

Regarding the ontological structure of the reality, various models of Chinese Vijnanavada have different understandings. On the relationship of the nature of ultimate reality (parini panna-svabhava) and "dependence upon other" (paratantra-svabhava); the old model suggested that only after the nature of "dependence upon other" is entirely excluded can the nature of "ultimate reality" be fully realized. This implied that the distinction between the nature of "dependence upon other" and "mistaken imagination" (parikalpita-svabhāva) is not clear enough; the distinction between an object being cognition and that of distortion from subjective projection is not clearly drawn.

For Xuanzang's model, although the ontological status of the nature of "ultimate reality" and that of the "dependence upon other" is different, they co-exist and are compatible. He rejected the idea that the nature of "dependence upon other" should be excluded to disclose the nature of "ultimate reality". This approach apparently has purpose to "save the phenomena world".[6]

Buddhist Prama avada did not have any influence on the old transmission of Chinese Vijnanavada and other Yogacara traditions, such as the Tibetan one. This old model in East Asian Yogacara is commonly shared by other Buddhist traditions, such as the Yogacarins during the Pre-Dharmapala period; various aspects of Dignaga's Prama avada had not yet been integrated. On the other hand, Xuanzang's understanding is the only existing model within the Vijnanavada tradition that had to go through revision after receiving the impact from Pramanavada. This new model can provide us with a sophisticated reading of Vijnanavada. Xuanzang had explicitly quoted Dignaga's *Pramaṇasamuccaya* and other of his treatises on logic and epistemology, and intergrated these Pramanavada elements into his interpretation to enrich the detail analysis on Vijnanavada. Pramanavada concept of object from Dignaga's *Alambanapariksavrtti* influenced Xuanzang's theory of the multi-fold structure of consciousness and its relation with object (alambana). In Xuanzang's doctrine of the four-fold structure of consciousness, a series of unique viewpoints are directly derived from Dignaga's theory. For example, the cognizer aspect (darsana-bhaga) is composed of direct perceiver (pratyaksa) and inferential cognizer (anumana), while object (alambana) or cognized (prameya) is also correspondingly composed of special character (svalak a a) and general character (samanyalaksa a). Furthermore, self-cognition (svasamvitti) is also derived from Dignaga[7].

There are two variations derived from the contrast among the various models of Chinese Vijnanavada. First, the competitive interpretations between Wonch'uk (圓測, 613-696), one of the representative figures in Korean Vijnanavada during the Tang Dynasty, and Kui-ji (窺基, 632-682), the main successor of Xuanzang. Wonch'uk has a special role in East Asian Yogacara, since according to the traditional mainstream narration on the Chinese Yogacara lineage, his interpretation was treated as a heterodox within Vijnanavada. At the end of the Tang Dynasty, Chinese Vijnanavada had subsided due to various causes. It wasn't revitalized until the Republican Period of the early twentieth century. The second variation of the debate within East Asian Vijnanavada is composed of a series of famous controversies of the Republican Period. The controversies about the contrast among various Yogacara models were approached once again from the perspective of modern scholarship of philology.

Other than the series of explicit contrasts between various models of Yogacara, there is another series of issues, which are discussed by Xuanzang's system. The theories included are as follows: (i) the philosophical implication in Yogacara's meditative theory[8] ; (ii) two types of grasping (dvi atmagraha), namely, grasping of the substance of the person (pudgalatmagraha) and grasping of the substance of the phenomenon (dharmatmagraha) [9]; (iii) the two ways that grasping are aroused, namely, innately (sahaja) and ideologically (parikalpita) aroused[10]; (iv) two levels of grasping which are operated at empirical level by the mental consciousness (manovijnana), and at the subtle level by ego-consciousness (manas)[11] ; (v) two obstructions (avarana), the afflictive obstruction (klesavarana)[12] and obstruction of knowledge (jneyavarana)[13]. Regarding the two obstructions, Xuanzang on the one hand provided a detailed analysis of the structure, relationship and pattern of klesa, while on the other hand he also provided the first systematic explanation on "obstruction of knowledge" (jneyavarana) in the history of Yogacara Buddhism. Jneyavarana is a unique theory shared by all Mahayana traditions, yet it is composed of different issues from the uncritical attitude of epistemological realism to the unattainable completeness of knowledge. This complexity lead to a lot of confusion for modern scholars, partially due to the early Yogacara text rarely explaining the theory clearly. It was never clearly explained until Xuanzang's model. (vi) The theory about ignorance or misconception (avidya) had extended from the domain of individually-based to that of collectively-operated by the interaction among members of the community that shared the similar mentality[14]. (vii) The issues about the component, structure, language behavior and sign and semantic content of language are covered in Xuanzang's Vijnanavadian theory of language[15]. (viii) The issues about the nature, ontological status, function and the typology of intended object (alambana) are discussed in Xuanzang's model[16]. (ix) Three Body (trikaya) and an Enlightenment Personality's Fourfold of Wisdom (prajna)[17]. (x) Xuanzang's unique theory of four folds of two truths (satya-dvaya)[18].

Some conclusion about the Xuanzang's model can be made. It cannot be denied that there is substantial difference between Xuanzang's interpretation and the Sanskrit text. But it would be another matter to claim that Xuanzang's model deviates philosophically from the basic principle of Yogacara. The thick encyclopedic information, unique interpretation and the philosophical sophistication of Xuanzang's system is neither replaceable nor can be ignored. This is also one of the typical examples that East Asian Buddhism can share with other Buddhist traditions.

Notes

[1] This is the point that still proposed by the Critical Buddhism at Japan within the last two decades.

[2] Paul Griffiths, *On Being Mindless, Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem* (Illinois: Open Court Publishing 1991), pp.79-80.

[3] *Taisho shinshū dai zokyo*《大正新修大藏經》) Vol. 31, p. 7b.

[4] *Taisho* 31, p. 45c.

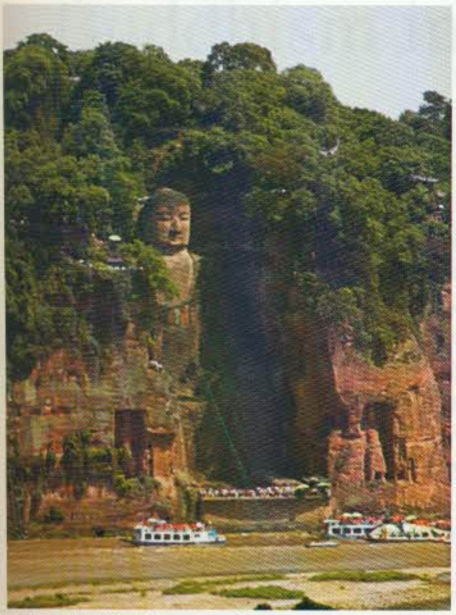
[5] *Taisho* 31, p. 10b.

[6] *Taisho* Vol. 31, pp. 45c-46b.

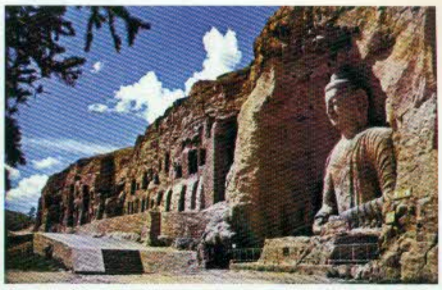
[7] *Taisho* Vol. 31, p. 10b-c.

[8] *Taisho* Vol. 45, p.258c.

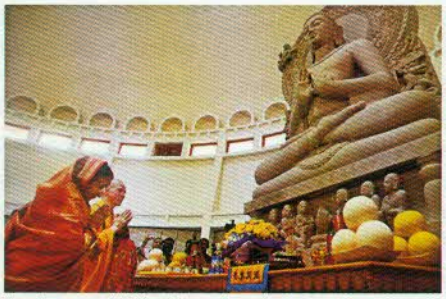
[9] *Taisho* Vol. 31, p.2a.



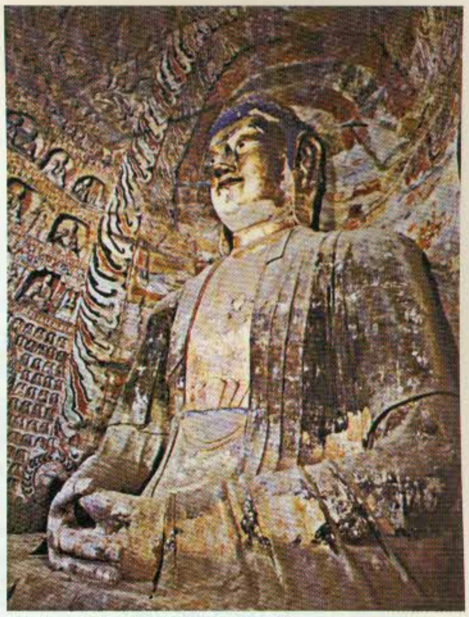
Leshan - Giant Buddha across the rever



Caves of Yunganghuan



Newly opened White Horse Temple



Northern Wei Gilded Buddha from Yungang

Monk in Wannian Si. Emei Shan Sichuan

10 *Taisho* Vol. 31, pp. 1a,2a,7a.

11 *Taisho* Vol. 31,p.2a.

12 *Taisho* Vol. 31, p. 48c.

13 *Taisho* Vol. 31, pp. 51b-53c.

14 *Taisho* Vol. 31, pp. 7a, 40c.

15 *Taisho* Vol. 31, p.6a .

16 *Taisho* Vol. 31, p.40b .

17 *Taisho* Vol. 31, p.57c.

18 *Taisho* Vol. 31, p.47c.

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ESSAY 18

Buddhism in Taiwan

Kai-Wen Lu

Introduction

Taiwan, also known in the past as Formosa (*Ilha Formosa*, "Beautiful Island", from the Portuguese), is an island situated in East Asia in the western Pacific Ocean and located off the south-eastern coast of mainland China. The island forms over 99% of the current territory of the Republic of China (ROC) following the Chinese Civil War in 1950. Therefore the term "Taiwan" is also a common name to refer to the Republic of China itself.[1]

A brief glimpse of the history of Taiwan will be helpful to understand the development of Taiwanese Buddhism in the forthcoming content.[2] Taiwan (excluding Penghu) was first populated by Negrito, and then Austronesian people.[3] It was colonized by the Dutch in the seventeenth century, followed by an influx of Han Chinese, including Hakka immigrants from areas of Fujian and Guangdong of mainland China across the Taiwan Strait. The Spanish also built a settlement in the north for a brief period, but were driven out by the Dutch in 1642.

In 1662, Koxinga (Zheng Cheng-gong), a Ming Dynasty loyalist, defeated the Dutch and established a base of operations on the island. Zheng's forces were later defeated by the Qing Dynasty in 1683. From then, parts of Taiwan became increasingly integrated into the Qing Dynasty before it ceded the island to the Empire of Japan in 1895 following the First Sino-Japanese War. Taiwan produced rice and sugar to be exported to the Empire of Japan and also served as a base for Japanese colonial expansion into South-east Asia and the Pacific during the Second World War. Japanese imperial education was implemented in Taiwan and many Taiwanese also fought for Japan during the war.

Following the Second World War, the ROC led by the Kuomintang (KMT) became the governing polity of Taiwan. In 1949, after losing control of mainland China following the Chinese Civil War, the ROC government under the KMT withdrew to Taiwan and Chiang Kai-shek declared martial law. Japan formally renounced all territorial rights to Taiwan in 1952 in the San Francisco Peace Treaty. The KMT ruled Taiwan as a single-party state for forty years, until democratic reforms were mandated during the final year of authoritarian rule under Chiang Ching-kuo. The reforms were promulgated under Chiang's successor, Lee Teng-hui, which culminated in the first-ever direct presidential election in 1996. In 2000, Chen Shui-bian was elected president, becoming the first non-KMT president of Taiwan. The 2008 election of President Ma Ying-jeou marked the second peaceful transfer of power, this time back to the KMT.

In the modern political arena, although Taiwan is not part of mainland China, nevertheless most of the Taiwanese settlers and their ancestors almost all came from mainland China centuries ago. Both Taiwan and mainland China have shared a common culture and blood lineage in past centuries. On tracing the origins of Buddhism in Taiwan it's impossible to separate the close relationship with each other, especially in the early years and the later development of Buddhism in Taiwan. Therefore, in this essay, an initial introduction of Chinese Buddhism can supply a historical understanding of the background to figure out the early paradigm and texts of Buddhism in Taiwan.

Beginnings of Buddhism in Ancient China

It is difficult today to find out the exact date when Buddhism was conveyed to ancient China. All we can imagine is that only a few Chinese accepted Buddhism as their religion in the beginning, and they seem never to have been clearly notified by the Chinese government and officials who belonged to the upper structure of ancient Chinese society.

In the beginning of the Christian era, around the time of the Han Dynasty, there was a country called Da Yuezhi located in Central Asia. In the second year BCE, King Da Yuezhi sent his messenger I-Chun to the Chinese capital city of Chang'an for diplomatic affairs. At that time, I-Chun gave oral teachings on Buddhist sutras to a Chinese student, Chin-Lu. The *Hou Hanshu* ("The Book of the Later Han Dynasty") records the visit of King Da Yuezhi and suggests that some Yuezhi already followed the Buddhist faith during the first century BCE. This is the first official record in which it is mentioned that Buddhism was conveyed into China.

However, the possible date of the arrival of Buddhism in China and East Asia might be earlier than this. Up to the date of Chinese Emperor Han-Wu (156-87 BCE), who extended his military and commercial influence to Central Asia, Central Asia Buddhism conveyed from India might have already been conveyed to East Asia.

Moreover, there was a Chinese legend in *The Note for Past Buddhist Treasures* which mentioned that an Indian, Bhikkhu Sri-Fan, with his seventeen companions, visited the Chinese capital city Xian-Yang at the time of the Qin dynasty (221-206 BCE). The epoch of the Chinese Qin dynasty emperor Qin Shi Huang almost coincided with the reign of the Indian Mauryan emperor, Asoka the Great.

According to some European historians, Asoka convened the third Buddhist council at Pataliputra (today's Patna) and sent a royal Buddhist missionary to Nepal, Bhutan and China to spread Buddhism around 250 BCE. However, it has not been confirmed that these missionaries arrived in China or that they were responsible for establishing the teachings of Buddhism there.

Besides, "The burning of the books and burying of the scholars" is a phrase that refers to a policy and a sequence of events in the Qin Dynasty of ancient China, between 213 -206 BCE. During these events, the Hundred Schools of Thought were pruned, except that of Legalism. Even though Buddhism had already appeared in the interior regions of China, by the time of its suppression, which began in 213 BCE, it left no way for Buddhist survival.

Regarding the introduction of Buddhism to China, a number of accounts in historical Chinese literature have led to the popularity of certain legends. According to the most popular account, Han Dynasty Emperor Ming (58–75 CE) and his young brother Liu Yin precipitated the introduction of Buddhist teachings to China. After dreaming of a golden man with a shining halo, Emperor Ming questioned his advisors about the dream. One advisor told him about the existence of a man called the Buddha in regions to the west of China. The emperor then sent an envoy to Tianzhu (India) to inquire about the teachings of the Buddha.

Buddhist scriptures were said to have been sent to China in 67 BCE on the backs of white horses, after which the White Horse Temple was named. Two Indian monks accompanied them, named Dharmaraksa and Kaśyapa Mātamga, together with sutras containing 600,000 Sanskrit words.

The first Buddhist sutra which was said to be translated into Chinese by the two Indian monks was titled *The Sutra of Forty-two Chapters*, but some scholars suggest that it was translated from the Bactria languages of the Da Yeuzhi country. Besides, this sutra is obviously not a complete version, but a fragmentary kind of verse-style, as was the *Dhammapada* for Buddhist beginners.

These records come from traditional accounts in the *Shiji* ("Records of the Great Historian") and the *Han Shu* ("The Book of Han"). According to these records, the introduction of Buddhism to China did not merely commence with the Han Dynasty Emperor Ming: it is also known that Buddhism has been officially recognized by the Chinese government and initially established its foundation and scale in China.

In 148 BC, An Shigao arrived in China at the Han Dynasty capital of Luoyang, where he produced a substantial number of translations of Indian Buddhist texts and attracted a devoted community of followers. More than a dozen works by An Shigao are extant, including texts dealing with meditation, abhidharma, and basic Buddhist doctrines. An Shigao's corpus does not contain any Mahayana scriptures, though he himself is regularly referred to as a bodhisattva in early Chinese sources. Scholarly studies of his translations have shown that they are most closely affiliated with the Sarvastivada School.

Mahayana Buddhism was first widely propagated in China by the Kushan monk Lokaksema (active c. 164–186 BCE), who came from the ancient Buddhist kingdom of Gandhara. He was the earliest-known Buddhist monk to have translated Mahayana sutras into the Chinese language. Lokaksema translated important Mahayana sutras such as the *Attasahasrika Prajnasparamita Sutra*, as well as rare, early Mahayana sutras on topics such as samadhi and meditation on the Buddha Akobhya. These translations from Lokaksema continue to give insight into the early period of Mahayana Buddhism.

Some famous translators also contributed to the translation of Buddhist sutras during the second and third centuries. With their efforts, Kang Tsang Kai, Kang Tsang Hui, Dharmaraksa and so on, much Buddhist literature was introduced and translated into the Chinese language.

In the very early period of Chinese Buddhism, these translators introduced two kinds of Buddhist literature into China. One was the Sarvastivada school of literature mainly based on the *Agama Sutra* and the teaching of meditation. The other is the Mahayana school of literature mainly based on the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* and the teaching of Pure Land. These two streams are in parallel.

Because China is far from India, the ancient Chinese knew very little about the geography, culture and history of the development of Indian Buddhism. For these reasons, even ancient Chinese Buddhists may seem curious about the difference of two paradigms of Buddhist canons, but basically they cannot tell anyone from each other, and they accept both as the Buddha's true teachings.

Initially, Buddhism in China faced a number of difficulties in becoming established. The concept of monasticism and the aversion to social affairs seemed to contradict the long-established Confucian norms and standards established in

Mengjia Longshan Temple

Chinese society. However, Buddhism was often associated with Taoism in its ascetic meditative tradition. For this reason, a concept-matching system was used by some early Indian translators to adapt native Buddhist ideas to Taoist ideas and terminology. During this time, Indian monks continued to travel the Silk Road to teach Buddhism, and translation work was primarily carried out by foreign monks rather than Chinese.

The Silk Road transmission of Buddhism to China started in the third century BCE during the reign of the first emperor of China, Qin Shihuang. The initial documented translations by Buddhist monks were in the second century CE, probably as a consequence of the expansion of the Kushan Empire into the Chinese territory of the Tarim Basin. From the fourth century onward, with Faxian (337-422)'s pilgrimage to India (395-414), and later Xuanzang (629-644), Chinese pilgrims, too, started to travel to northern India, their source of Buddhism, in order to get improved access to original scriptures. The Silk Road transmission of Buddhism began to decline around the seventh century with the rise of Islam in Central Asia.

After the famous monk Kumarajiva (344-413) was captured during the Chinese conquest of the Buddhist kingdom of Kucha, he was imprisoned for many years. When he was released, he became influential in Chinese Buddhism and was appraised as a great master from the West. He was especially valued by Emperor Yao Xing of the state of Later Qin, who gave him an honorific title and treated him like a god.

Kumarajiva revolutionized Chinese Buddhism with his high quality translations, which are still praised for their flowing smoothness, clarity of meaning, subtlety, and literary skill. Due to the efforts of Kumarajiva, Buddhism in China became not only recognized for its practice methods, but also its high philosophy and religion. The arrival of Kumarajiva also set the standard for Chinese translations of Buddhist texts, effectively doing away with previous concept-matching systems.

The translations of Kumarajiva have often remained more popular than those of other translators. Among the most well-known are his translations of the *Diamond Sutra*, the *Amitabha Sutra*, the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Vimalakirti Nirdesa Sutra*, the *Mulamadhyamakakarika*, and the *Aṣṭasahasrika Prajnaparamita Sutra*. These sutras deeply affected the development of Chinese Buddhism, and facilitated the rising of Chinese Buddhist sects, for example the sects of Pure Land Buddhism and Chan Buddhism.

In the centuries following the introduction of Buddhism to China, Chan grew to become the largest sect in Chinese Buddhism, and produced the largest body of literature in Chinese history of any sect or tradition. The teachers responsible for Huineng (638-713)'s posterity began to branch off into numerous different schools, each with their own special emphasis, but all of which kept the same basic focus on meditation practice, personal instruction, and personal experience. By the Ming period (1368–1644) the preeminence of Chan had been so firmly established that almost the entire Buddhist clergy were affiliated with either its Linji or Caodong lineages, both of which claimed descent from Bodhidharma."[4] The sect of Pure Land Buddhism initiated by the Chinese monk Huiyuan (334-416) was also just as popular as Chan Buddhism during the Tang Dynasty .[5]

Early Years of Buddhism in Taiwan

The dissemination of religions has always had a close connection with trade and immigration. According to documented records, Buddhism was propagated from mainland China to Taiwan by the time of Chen Cheng-kung's arrival in Taiwan. It was brought to Taiwan during the Ming dynasty by settlers from the Fukien and Kwangtung Provinces, and it was discouraged by the Dutch colonial rulers who controlled Taiwan from 1624 until 1663, until Cheng Cheng-kung (Koxinga) drove the colonists from Taiwan in 1663.

In the Dutch colonial period, Taiwan's main local religion developed by aboriginal settlers was Animism. They worshipped natural phenomena, i.e. wind, rain, lightning, sun, moon and stars. As for the period of Chen Cheng-kung's rule in the late Min Dynasty, alongside heavy immigration from mainland China, various religions were brought to Taiwan. In addition to Buddhism and Daoism, Islam was also conveyed to Taiwan by a small number of Muslims who undertook military service in Chen's army.

As historians know well, by the end of the seventeenth century, no official bureau or administrative organization was set up by the Chinese emperor in Taiwan; therefore, no official temple or monastery was built by the government. Later, the son of Chen Cheng-kung, Cheng Ching, established the first Buddhist temple in Taiwan, the Mitou Shi (the temple of Amitabuddha).[6] In the period of Chen's rule, Taiwanese Buddhism's initial development was in the area of Tainan County.

When the Qing dynasty took control of Taiwan by defeating Cheng Ching's son, Ching Ning, in 1683, large numbers of monks came from Fukien and Kwangtung Provinces to establish temples, and many different Buddhist sects flourished. Monastic Buddhism, however, would not arrive until the nineteenth century. During the period of Qing Dynasty's rule, the development of Taiwanese Buddhism naturally reflected its hybrid or mixture of characteristics that combined with Buddhism and non-Buddhism. The dominant religious beliefs during the Ming dynasty were the traditional mixture of ancestor worship, Daoism and Buddhism. The Chinese believed in a host of deities in what may be termed Chinese folk religion. The needs of those immigrants who came across the Taiwan Strait were quite secular; all they sought were not much more than a safe journey, wealth, elimination of disaster, and a better reincarnation in the next life. Although they took refuge from Buddhism, they were also the followers of other religions. They accepted Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucian ideals as well as Chinese folk religion in pragmatic style, which gave Taiwanese Buddhism its characteristics of syncretism.

Japanese Colonial Period

The period of Japanese colonialism commenced in 1895. Following the Meiji Restoration, Shinto was made the state religion of the Empire of Japan, and in 1868 its combination with Buddhism was outlawed in an attempt to purify Shinto by abolishing many Buddhist and Confucian ideals. Nevertheless, even Japanese Shinto as a ruling ideology arose and obtained its important success by the victory of war with a foreign country at the end of the nineteenth century, but Japan's government mainly still cultivated Buddhism as a religious support for ruling Taiwan, in spite of Japanese Shinto. This ruling paradigm is quite different from the mode of Western countries that made colonial areas convert to Christianity, which is alien to the indigenous people. For this reason, this policy made the majority of Han Chinese and the aboriginals of Taiwan to speed up assimilation with Japan.

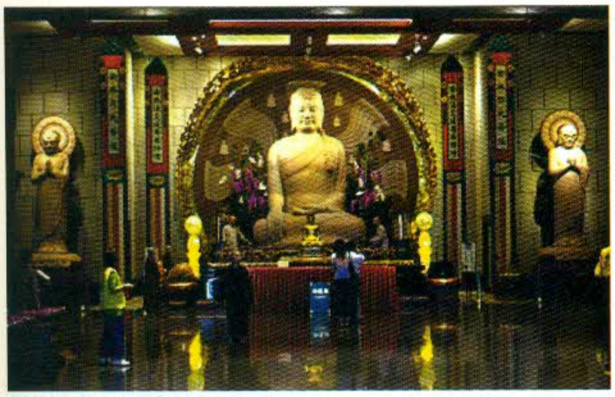
Besides, during the Japanese period (1895–1945), many schools of Japanese Buddhism came to Taiwan to propagate their Buddhism teachings, such as Kegon, Tendai, Shingon Buddhism, Rinzai school, Soto, Jodo shu, Jodo Shinshu and Nichiren Buddhism. In 1941, the population of Taiwan was nearly five million, and those who were actively involved in Japanese Buddhism were estimated at eighty thousand. Among the Japanese Buddhist schools, Soto, Jodo shu, Jodo Shinshu and Nichiren Buddhism were well-developed.

In the same period, most Taiwan Buddhist temples came to affiliate with one of three central temples:[7]

- North (Keelung): Yueh-mei Mountain, founded by Master Shan-hui
- Center (Miaoli): Fa-yun Temple, founded by Master Chueh-li
- South (Tainan): Kai-yuan Temple, also founded by Chueh-li

All the dharma lineages of these temples can be traced to Chan schools of the southern Fujian province. Though keeping a close relationship with their original lineages, all the founders or revivalists of these temples were local Taiwan monks, which means that Taiwanese Buddhism became a different form to that of motherland China.

Although the period of Japanese colonialism was only fifty years, Japanese Buddhism, engaged in political and sectarian ferment, had a powerful impact on Taiwanese Buddhism. The Ta-pa-ni Incident, which was caused in 1915 by Taiwanese politics and the religious community, was one of the largest armed uprisings against Japanese rule in Taiwan. An alternative name used to refer to the incident is the Silai Temple Incident (Sairai-an jiken).[8] Afterwards, the Japanese government reinforced its control over religion in Taiwan. As a Japanese colony, Taiwan fell under the influence of Japanese Buddhism. Many temples experienced pressure to affiliate with Japanese lineages, including many whose status with respect to Buddhism or Taoism was unclear. (Emphasis on Chinese folk religion was widely considered a form of protest against Japanese rule.) Attempts were made to introduce a married priesthood (as in Japan). These attempts failed, as emphasis on vegetarianism and/or clerical celibacy became another means of anti-Japanese protest.



Buddist Temple - Southern Taiwan

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Temple in the night

At that time, under the pressures of a Japanese government ruling, most of Taiwan's Buddhist temples, including three central temples, were subsumed into the Japanese Rinzai school to avoid extinction. This conversion resulted in the destruction of the Buddhist system, ritual, rules and regulations which ascended from the Fujian Buddhism of mainland China.

With Japan's defeat in the Second World War, Taiwan fell under the control of Chiang Kai-shek's government, resulting in contrary political pressures. Under the control of martial law declared by Chiang, the purpose of religious policy adopted by the Kuomintang government was to destroy the influence of Japan and to reconstruct the power of mainland China. In 1949, a number of mainland monks fled to Taiwan alongside Chiang's military forces and received preferential treatment by the new regime. During this period, Buddhist institutions fell under the authority of the government-controlled Buddhist Association of China. Originally established in 1947 (in Nanjing), it was dominated by "mainland" monks.

Generally speaking, in the period of Chiang's regime, Taiwan's Buddhist development was inclined to reform and purify Buddhism affected by folk religion, by Japan, and even by Fujian Buddhism of southern mainland China, and to re-embrace the mainstream of Chinese Buddhism. The useful tactic of Chinese Buddhist reformation was to ordain or re-ordain novice Taiwanese Buddhist monks and nuns. At that time, ordination procedure was mostly led by mainland monks who fled to Taiwan alongside Chiang's military forces. Skillfully Taiwanese Buddhism avoided the affection of Japan and folk religion and was subsumed into mainland Chinese Buddhism again.

Modern Developments

Although the Buddhist Association of China obtained its firm footing during the 1950s, its authority began to decline in the 1960s when independent Buddhist organizations began to be permitted; especially since the 1987 lifting of martial law in Taiwan. During these last fifty years (1960-2010), Buddhism in Taiwan started to develop in a modern style.

Roughly speaking, the most important accomplishment of Buddhist movements and philosophy in modern Taiwan is the rising of Humanistic Buddhism. Humanistic Buddhism (*renjian fojiao*) is a modern Buddhist philosophy practiced mostly by Mahayana Buddhists. It involves the integration of people's spiritual practice into all aspects of their daily lives. Buddhist monastics such as Taixu, Yinshun and Hsing Yun have pioneered the propagation of Humanistic Buddhism.[9]

Humanistic Buddhism claims to encompass all of the Buddhist teachings from the time of Gautama Buddha to the present. Its goal is to live the bodhisattva way, which means to be an energetic, enlightened, and endearing person who strives to help all sentient beings liberate themselves. It focuses on issues of the world rather than on how to leave the world behind; on caring for the living, rather than the dead; on benefiting others, rather than benefiting oneself, and on universal salvation rather than cultivation for only oneself.

The famous founder of Humanistic Buddhism, the Ven. Master Taixu (1890-1947), was a Buddhist activist, thinker and modernist who advocated the reform and renewal of Chinese Buddhism. Being a revolutionary activist for the Chinese, Taixu took the doctrine and adapted it so that he might propagate Buddhism throughout the world. One of his grand schemes was to reorganize the Sangha; an attempt to revitalize Buddhism, an important step to bring about Pure Land in this world. (Pure Land Buddhism was widely practiced in China during his time.) Taixu's modernist mentality caused him to propagate the idea of Pure Land, not as a land of Buddhist cosmology but as something possible to create here and now in this very world.

Yin Shun (1905-2005) was also inspired by Master Taixu. He was a well-known Buddhist monk and scholar in the tradition of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, particularly the Three Treatise school.[10] Yin Shun's research helped bring forth the ideal of Humanistic Buddhism, a leading mainstream Buddhist philosophy studied and upheld by many practitioners. His work also regenerated the interests in the long-ignored Agamas

(Nikayas) among Chinese Buddhist society and his ideas are echoed by Theravadin teacher Bhikkhu Bodhi. As a contemporary master, he was most popularly known as the mentor of Cheng Yen (Zhengyan), the founder of the Tzu-Chi Buddhist Foundation, as well as the teacher of several other prominent monastics. Although Master Yin Shun is closely associated with the Tzu-Chi Foundation, he has had a decisive influence on others of the new generation of Buddhist monks such as Sheng-yen of Dharma Drum Mountain and Hsing Yun of Fo Guang Shan, who are active in humanitarian aid, social work, environmentalism and academic research. He was considered by many Buddhists as their mentor.

In the 1960s, when independent Buddhist organizations began to be permitted, some Buddhist monasteries, with foresight, started their propagation activities and freed themselves from the interference of the Buddhist Association of China. Four local Buddhist teachers whose institutions are especially significant are popularly likened to the "Four Heavenly Kings of Taiwanese Buddhism." They are:

- North (Taipei): Master Sheng-yen of Dharma Drum Mountain
- South (Kaohsiung): Master Hsing Yun of Fo Guang Shan
- East (Hualien): Master Cheng Yen of the Tzu Chi Foundation
- West (Nantou): Master Wei Chueh of Chung Tai Shan

Several of these figures have been influenced by the Humanistic Buddhism of Master Yin Shun, a theological approach which has come to distinguish Taiwanese Buddhism. Their missions have branches all over the world. In a reversal of the older historical relationship, these Taiwanese Buddhists have played important roles in the revival of Buddhism in China

One of the first private networks of Buddhist centers was that of Hsing Yun, who first attained popularity through radio broadcasts in the 1950s. Hsing Yun is known for his "Humanistic Buddhism" philosophy employed by the Fo Guang Shan order, which utilizes Buddhism to fit the needs of a modern world. He is credited by Buddhist scholars as being one of the foremost leaders in the modern reformation of Buddhism by opening monasteries, universities and schools around the world, as well as engaging in religious dialogue with other Buddhist sects and religious faiths. In Taiwan, Hsing Yun is also notable for his activity in politics, particularly his pro-China views and with government legislation, and is often criticized for his views by those in favor of Taiwanese independence, political pundits, conservative Buddhists and religious figures.

Another key figure was Cheng Yen, a nun ordained by the aforementioned Yin Shun who later founded Tzu Chi, Taiwan's most important charity. It is difficult to overestimate the impact of her example on the image of Taiwan's Sangha. Tzu Chi runs several hospitals in Taiwan, and conducts worldwide relief work. A 1999 earthquake centered in Puli brought praise for Tzu Chi for its effective response, in contrast with that of the Taiwanese government.

Master Sheng Yen (1930-2009) was the founder of the Dharma Drum Mountain, a Buddhist organization based in Taiwan. During his time in the island, Sheng Yen was well-known as one of the progressive teachers who sought to teach Buddhism in a modern and Western-influenced world. Master Wei Chueh (1928-) founded the Chung Tai Shan Monastery and Buddhist order, and is credited with reviving the traditional teachings of Chan (or Zen) Buddhism.

During the 1980s, the institutions of Buddhist education also gradually developed and became a modern organization credited by Taiwan's Ministry of Education. At that time, Buddhist leaders pressed the Ministry to relax various policies preventing the organization of a Buddhist university. The eventual result was that in the 1990s - flush with contributions made possible by Taiwan's "miracle economy" - not one but half a dozen universities emerged, each associated with a different Buddhist leader. Among them were Tzu Chi University, Hsuan-Chuang University, Huafan University, Fo Guang University, Nanhua University, and Dharma Drum Buddhist University. The regulations of Taiwan's Ministry of Education prohibit recognized colleges and universities from requiring religious belief or practice, and these institutions therefore appear little different from others of their rank. (Degrees granted by seminaries, of which Taiwan has several dozen, are not recognized by the government.)

Recent Growth

In recent decades Vajrayana Buddhism or Esoteric Buddhism has increased in popularity in Taiwan as Tibetan lamas from the four major Tibetan schools (Kagyu, Nyingma, Sakya and Gelug) have visited the island, including the fourteenth Dalai Lama, who came in 1997, 2001 and 2009. The Koyasan Shingon sect of Japan also maintains its own practice centers and temples in Taiwan, some of them historically established during the Japanese period of Taiwanese history, while others were established in the post-Second World War era in order to re-establish an orthodox Esoteric Buddhist lineage that was eliminated during the Tang Dynasty. The True Buddha School led by Lu Shen-yeun is the largest Vajrayana sect in Taiwan, although at least seven established Buddhist organizations have charged that the group functions as a personality cult.

It is worth mentioning the recent development of Theravada Buddhism in Taiwan. Alongside the re-estimation of the long-ignored Agamas (Nikayas), which was raised by Yin-Shun in the 1950s, some Buddhists who wish to seek the original teachings of the historical Buddha pay more attention to Theravada Buddhism or the Buddhism of eastern and southern Asia. Prof. Yang Yu-Wen (1937-) is one of the renowned scholars inspired by the Ven. Yin Shun. He edited a book titled *The Summary of Agamas* (Agama-Sankhepa) in the 1980s which had some effect on those Buddhists who were interested in the early teachings of the Buddha, or studied in Buddhist institutes.

By the beginning of the 1990s, a few Taiwanese monks ordained in Thai or Burma Buddhist monasteries were initially active in the Buddhist Sangha and society. Though not the majority of Taiwanese monks, they have generated a subtle impact on Taiwan Buddhism based on Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. One of the outstanding Theravada monks was Bhikkhu Min-fa (1952-2009), whose name in Pali was Thitadhammo. He was ordained as a monk in a Mahayana Buddhist monastery, stayed in America to propagate Buddhism, and then renounced his robe. However, in 1997 he was re-ordained as monk at the Thai Buddhist Monastery and established the Dhamma Rain Vihara in Taiwan. During this time he studied the Pali Tripitaka and published the *Dhamma Rain Magazine* in 2003.[11] As a Buddhist journal, which propagated the early teachings of Buddha, it is quite different from the style of mainstream Mahayana Buddhism in Taiwan. Unfortunately, Bhikkhu Min-fa suffered a heart attack and died in 2009. Besides, Bhikkhu Quan-zin (1965-) - Bukkhu Sopaka in Pali - is also a Theravada monk ordained in Burma. He established the Taiwandipa Theravada Buddhist College and brought the teachings of Theravada Buddhism to Tainan County in 2009.[12] The trend of Theravada Buddhist development in Taiwan is just commencing.

Conclusion

Buddhism is a major religion in Taiwan. Statistics provided by the Interior Ministry show that Taiwan's Buddhist population grew from 800,000 in 1983 to 4.9 million in 1995, a 600 percent increase against an overall population rise of about twelve percent. Additionally, in the same period, the number of registered Buddhist temples increased from 1,157 to 4,020, and the monks and nuns numbered 9,300, up from 3,470 in 1983. This trend can be attributed to the activity of various charismatic teachers, such as those mentioned above

In 2010, Taiwan's population was estimated at 23 million. Government statistics distinguish Buddhism from Taoism, giving almost equal numbers for both (in 2005, 8 million and 7.6 million respectively, out of a total population of 23 million). Many of Taiwan's self-declared "Buddhists" actually observe the more syncretistic practices associated with Chinese traditional religion. Self-avowed Buddhists may also be adherents of more localized faiths such as I-kuan Tao, which also emphasize Buddhist figures like Guanyin or Maitreya, and espouse vegetarianism.

Notes

1 "Country Profile: Taiwan". BBC. See the website: news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/country_profils/1285915.stm, retrieved January 25, 2011.

2 Some useful information can be found in the Database of the historical materials of Taiwanese Buddhism. Please check the website: ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/taiwan/index.htm, retrieved on January, 25, 2011.

3 Jules Quartly (27 November 2004). "In honor of the Little Black", Taipei Times. Website: www.taipeitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2004/11/27/2003212815, retrieved on January, 25, 2011.

4 Stanley Weinstein, "The Schools of Chinese Buddhism," in Kitagawa & Cummings (eds.), Buddhism and Asian History. New York: Macmillan, 1987, pp. 257–265, 264.

5 Ebrey, Patricia Buckley, The Cambridge Illustrated History of China, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

6 Lian Heng, *Introduction to the history of Taiwan* (*Taiwan Tong Shi*), chapter 22.

7 Four central temples were also mentioned at that time. Please see the website of *Dictionary of Taiwan Buddhism*. www.mst.org.tw/Magazine/Spc-Rep/spre0998.htm, retrieved on January 29, 2011.

8 Wang, Jian-Chung, "Taiwanese Buddhism in Japanese colonial period", presented in "Essays on Taiwan Buddhist Studies", 1996. pp.195-209. Website: ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-AN/an2412.htm, retrieved on January, 25, 2011. Besides, Yao, Li-Siang, "The relation between Taiwanese Buddhism and Zhai-Jiao in Japanese colonial period", "Essays on Taiwan Buddhist Studies", 1996. pp.71-84. Please check the website: ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-AN/an246.htm, retrieved on January, 25, 2011.

9 More discussions on Humanistic Buddhism also see Kan, Jheng Zong, *Re-nvestigation on Taiwan Buddhist History of Post World World II*, Taipei: Ta Chen Publisher, 2004. pp.241-480.

10 For the collection of Master Yin Shun's works, please check website: www.yinshun.org.tw/books/

11 Dhamma Rain Vihara and its publication, also see this website: nt.med.ncku.edu.tw/biochem/lsn/newrain/index.html, retrieved on January 28, 2011.

12 As for Taiwandipa Theravada Buddhist College, please see this website: www.taiwandipa.org.tw/index.php?url=10-30, retrieved on January 28, 2011.

Big Buddha, the world's largest outdoor, bronze, seated Buddha statue - Hong Kong

ESSAY 19

Buddhism in Hong Kong

John Shannon

Introduction

Hong Kong occupies a small area on the eastern bank of the Pearl River estuary, with mainland China to its north, and the South China Sea to its south, east and west. Hong Kong reverted to Chinese sovereignty on 1 July 1997, after more than 150 years as a British colony, and is now again part of China, as a Special Administrative Region. Before the arrival of the British, Hong Kong was a fairly insignificant place, in southern China's Guangdong Province, comprising only a few market towns, fishing villages and farms, and some salt mines, lime kilns and incense manufacturers. The name "Hong Kong", or *Xianggang* in Chinese, means "Fragrant Harbour", reflecting, perhaps, Hong Kong's situation as a port, where incense was produced, presumably for religious purposes, though not necessarily for Buddhist ones.

History and Development

Although Buddhism arrived in China at about the beginning of the Common Era (CE),[1] 500 years after its establishment in India, it did not arrive in Hong Kong until about 500 years after that, in the fifth century CE, during the Song Period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties. A legendary Buddhist monk, Beidu, is said to have built a hermitage on Castle Peak, Tuen Mun in the New Territories, in the northern part of Hong Kong on the site of the present Castle Peak Monastery.[2] There is, however, a belief held by some, without any real evidence, that when Buddhism was introduced into China some 2,000 years ago during the Han Dynasty, it first entered China via the sea route, rather than via the land route along the Silk Road through Central Asia, and that ships carrying Buddhist monks landed at Tuen Mun, a then fishing village in Hong Kong in the Pearl River estuary, on the way to Guangzhou, in Guangdong Province further north up the Pearl River.[3] But this cannot be proved. However, regardless, we do know for sure that Buddhism was practiced to some extent in Hong Kong by the time of the early Ming Dynasty. The oldest surviving temple in Hong Kong, which can be accurately dated, the Ling Wan Temple, in Yuen Long in the New Territories, was built in 1396 CE.[4] It is possible, however, that there were earlier Buddhist temples, built perhaps for the Chinese garrison stationed in Hong Kong during the Tang and Song dynasties, as Hong Kong was of strategic importance to China because of its location in the Pearl River estuary. But none are known, with any certainty, to have survived. Indeed it is probable that there was very little pure Buddhism practiced in Hong Kong during the Ming and Qing dynasties, and up to the beginning of the twentieth century, as Hong Kong was small in size and population and was not the seat of a county administration, so it is unlikely that there would have been any large monasteries, or many small ones either. However, *san jiao* (the three teachings: Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism), folk religion, ancestor worship and traditional practices, such as *fung shui*, were popular in Hong Kong then, as now.

Buddhism, *per se,* in Hong Kong, started to develop there during the early twentieth century, following the arrival in Hong Kong of many Buddhist monks and nuns from mainland China, fleeing religious persecution and political instability in the early Republican period after the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty in 1911. There was also a growth in the lay Buddhist community in Hong Kong, partly as a result of migration from the mainland. And the Buddhist revival and reform movement in early twentieth century China, spearheaded by the eminent *Chan* monk, the Ven. Master Taixu, had a significant impact in Hong Kong too.

The Ven. Taixu's public lecture visit to Hong Kong in 1920 and subsequently, the lecture visits of other eminent monks, such as the *Chan* reformist monk the Ven. Master Xuyun in 1936, the establishment of lay Buddhist study societies and the founding of Tung Lin Kok Yuen, a lay Buddhist organization, in 1935, played an important part in the development of Buddhism in Hong Kong between the two world wars.[5] Many monasteries, nunneries, temples, and hermitages were built during this period, mostly in the New Territories and on Hong Kong's Lantau Island, often clustering together. But this period also saw the start of a change from rural, monastic Buddhism to 'urban' Buddhism, with a shift from rural temples to 'inner-city' temples'[6] catering to the growing number of lay devotees. More Buddhist monks and nuns arrived in Hong Kong from the mainland during the late 1930s, fleeing the Japanese advance southwards through eastern China during the Sino-Japanese War, with some of them returning to mainland China when the Japanese invaded and occupied Hong Kong in 1941.

After the surrender of the Japanese in 1945, many of these monks and nuns who had sought temporary refuge in mainland China returned to Hong Kong. Among these was the mainland *Tiantai* monk, the Ven. Kok Kwong, who, along with other monastics and lay devotees, founded the Hong Kong Buddhist Association in 1945 and has been its President since 1966. A further influx of monks and nuns into Hong Kong occurred during the latter years of the Civil War and immediately following the establishment of the People's Republic of China, though many moved on again, to Taiwan (such as the Ven. Taixu's disciple, the eminent monk, the Ven. Master Yinshun) and to South East Asia, with some returning to mainland China following only a short stay in Hong Kong.

It was at this time that a new phenomenon began to emerge in Hong Kong: 'apartment Buddhism'.[7] When the refugee monks and nuns first arrived in Hong Kong from mainland China, they stayed in existing monasteries and, because numbers were so large, many slept on camp-beds until they were able to move out into their own accommodation, with some renting apartments, in high-rise apartment blocks, fitting them out as small temples and attracting lay disciples, rather than moving in to established monasteries. Some set up their own Buddhist associations for the laity, eventually building their own traditional-style monasteries or temples. For example, the Ven. Kok Kwong, President of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association, a *Tiantai* monk, established the Heung Hoi Ching Kok Lin Association, a Buddhist society for the laity, on Hong Kong Island in 1946 and built the Hong Kong Kun Chung Temple (a *Tiantai* monastery) in the New Territories in 1975; and the Ven. Wing Sing, Vice-President of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association, a *Tiantai monk*, established the Hong Kong Bodhi Siksa Society, a Buddhist society for the laity, on Hong Kong Island in 1965 and built the Western Monastery, a *Tiantai* monastery, in the New Territories in 1973, since considerably expanded. The proliferation of small 'apartment' temples, 'private' monasteries and monastic-run associations for the laity have led to a gradual decline in the traditional Chinese monastic community system and the fragmentation of the sangha.[8]

Another influx of monks and nuns from mainland China occurred during the period of the Cultural Revolution, the last such influx of monastics into Hong Kong, as subsequently more liberal religious policies have started to be adopted in China since the 1980s. Monks and nuns now regularly cross the mainland China-Hong Kong boundary for visits, in both directions, particularly since the retrocession of Hong Kong to China in 1997.

Today, monks originating from mainland China now predominate in the Hong Kong sangha, including many from outside of Guangdong Province; the nuns in Hong Kong are mostly from Guangdong Province and Taiwan. The size of the monastic sangha in Hong Kong is not large, though it fluctuates, as monks and nuns frequently move between Hong Kong, mainland China and elsewhere, and comprises probably no more than about 350 monks and 1,000 nuns, according to the Hong Kong Buddhist Association.[9] There are over thirty large monasteries in Hong Kong, many well known to the public and the Buddhist faithful (including Po Lin Monastery and Chi Lin Nunnery), and more than 130 small monasteries and hermitages on Lantau Island, popular among many monastics, because of its rural nature and comparative isolation.[10] The Buddhist laity in Hong Kong is increasing in size, role and influence, with a growing interest in 'non-Chinese', 'modern' and 'academic' forms of Buddhism. It is estimated that there are about one million Buddhists in Hong Kong, followers of the various traditions, out of a population of seven million,[11] although it is probable that this number includes *san jiao* practitioners too. According to the Hong Kong Buddhist Association, there are about 22,000 lay members of the association, and about 360 Buddhist organizations which are members, though this number includes monasteries, nunneries and hermitages, as well as lay societies.[12] Buddhism in Hong Kong today has changed, and has largely moved from the remote monasteries in the mountains and the rural areas into the built-up urban areas and the inner-city, where most of the people live, with the sangha and the laity working closely together in the fields of education, health and social welfare.

Most of these changes have taken place since the 1980s and some of the more important ones are described below. The most obvious changes, to the casual onlooker, are the Big Buddha statue at Po Lin Monastery on Lantau Island, and the Chi Lin Nunnery in Kowloon.

Po Lin Monastery

Po Lin Monastery and Chi Lin Nunnery

The Po Lin Monastery dates back to 1906, with the construction of a few small hermitages on the Ngong Ping plateau in the mountains of Lantau Island, with the first monastery being built there in 1924. Over the years the monastery gradually expanded, in a piecemeal way, with major construction works completed in 1970, including the construction of a two-storey main shrine hall, with a double-eave, gabled roof in the style of the Ming and Qing dynasties. In 1976, preparation for building the Big Buddha statue started, and in 1979, official links were established between Po Lin Monastery and the mainland Chinese Buddhist Association. Work on the Big Buddha, the world's largest outdoor, bronze, seated Buddha statue commenced in 1986, with mainland Chinese involvement, and was completed in 1993. Since then it has become one of Hong Kong's major tourist attractions as well as being a religious symbol and a place for religious practice. The Big Buddha statue contains two Buddha relics which were sent to Hong Kong from Sri Lanka in 1992; it also contains four religious paintings from Sri Lanka, depicting the life, ordination and *parinibbāna* of Sakyamuni Buddha.

More recently, work commenced on the construction of The Grand Hall of Ten Thousand Buddhas in 2000, due for completion in 2012. This large four-storey hall, in the style of the Song Dynasty, is aimed at further establishing Po Lin Monastery as a major centre for advancing Buddhism, including providing a permanent ordination platform, and for promoting Chinese culture.[13] Po Lin Monastery, although originally founded as a *Chan* Buddhism monastery, today combines both *Chan* and Pure Land practices, accommodates both monks and nuns, and is considered by most Hong Kong Chinese people to be Hong Kong's 'home' monastery, as Cantonese is used in its services, the native language of the majority of Hong Kong Chinese, rather than *Putonghua*, the official language of mainland China, which is used in some other Hong Kong monasteries and temples. Po Lin Monastery also serves the community, having built schools in Hong Kong (and mainland China) and homes for the aged.

Adjacent to the Po Lin Monastery at Ngong Ping, on a nearby hillside on Lantau Island, is the Wisdom Path, a cluster of thirty-eight tall wooden pillars, in a figure-of-eight configuration (suggesting 'infinity'), engraved with the 260 Chinese character Heart Sutra, and completed in 2005. The engravings, copies of the calligraphy of the renowned Chinese scholar and calligraphist, Professor Jao Tsung-I, have become a place for Hong Kong Buddhists to visit, where they can read the sutra in a peaceful, rural location.[14]

Chi Lin Nunnery - Diamond Hill Kowloon-Hong Kong

Chi Lin Nunnery originally founded in 1934 in Diamond Hill, Kowloon, was rebuilt in 1990, with mainland Chinese and Japanese involvement, as a large two-storey wooden complex, in the style of a Tang Dynasty Buddhist monastery, made entirely of wood, including the use of wooden pegs, joints and brackets, instead of iron nails and bolts. Chi Lin Nunnery is a place of beauty, dignity and elegance, its natural timber colours contrasting with the nearby Wong Tai Sin temple (this temple, although officially Daoist, is, in practice, a *san jiao* temple), painted in the usual reds, yellows and blues, like the majority of Chinese temples and monasteries, including Po Lin Monastery. Chi Lin Nunnery is symmetrical, built on a central axis, in the style of a traditional Chinese monastery, with side halls, a main Dharma Hall, a drum tower and a bell tower; it has four lotus ponds (symbols of Buddhism) behind the *shanmen* ("Mountain Gate"), the main entrance, and in front of the Hall of Celestial Kings, which leads to the Dharma Hall. The complex also includes accommodation for the nuns, Chinese gardens, a pagoda, an education centre and a home for the aged. Chi Lin Nunnery is an oasis of calm in urban Kowloon, with a busy multi-lane highway to its front and high-rise apartment blocks nearby to its other sides, yet, once entering the *shanmen,* a sense of peacefulness prevails.

Across the multi-lane highway, and connecting with the Chi Lin Nunnery by a footbridge, is the large Nan Lian Garden, a landscaped Tang Dynasty-style garden, built by the Hong Kong Government in 2006 and managed by the Chi Lin Nunnery. The garden contains ponds stocked with fish, and bridges and pavilions, large ornamental rocks, many different types of trees, a Chinese tea house and a vegetarian restaurant. The garden is a tranquil spot, matching the serenity of Chi Lin Nunnery, both of which have become popular with tourists, as well as worshippers and locals seeking a temporary respite from the bustle of Kowloon.[15]

The Buddha's Birthday Public Holiday

But changes to Buddhism in Hong Kong since the 1980s have not been limited to built-structures. Buddhism is now officially recognized in Hong Kong as an important religion. After many years of trying to persuade the British colonial Hong Kong Government of the importance of Buddhism to Hong Kong, but to no avail, the Hong Kong Buddhist Association finally succeeded after Hong Kong reverted to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. The Buddha's Birthday was officially declared a Public Holiday in 1998, occurring on the eighth day of the fourth month in the Lunar calendar (in April or May in the Gregorian calendar), taking its place alongside various Christian and traditional Chinese festivals.

Buddhism Practiced in Hong Kong

What types of Buddhism are practiced in Hong Kong today? Mahayana Buddhism predominates, especially its various Chinese schools (not surprising, as ethnic Chinese make up about 95% of Hong Kong's population[16]). But Tibetan Buddhism is gaining in popularity and there is a small Theravada presence too. In addition there are also Vipassana meditation centres, and non-sectarian centres.

Pure Land Buddhism is the most common form of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism practiced in Hong Kong, particularly among the elderly, but much of it is combined with *Chan*. Syncretism has always been a feature of Chinese Buddhism, not just between Buddhist schools, but also between Chinese religions, hence the *san jiao*, the mix of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. But pure *Chan* Buddhism is practiced too, in a small monastery, Po Lam, close to Po Lim Monastery, on Lantau Island. *Tiantai* is also practiced, and the Ven. Kok Kwong and the Ven. Wing Sing, the president and vice-president of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association respectively, are both *Tiantai* monks. Chinese esoteric Buddhism (Zhenyan/Mijong) is also represented in Hong Kong, as is the Sanlun School. Chinese Humanistic Buddhism, has become increasingly popular too, and public talks by the Ven. Master Xingyun, a charismatic mainland Chinese *Chan* monk based in Taiwan and founder of Fo Guang Shan, has a number of centres in Hong Kong, and has attracted many thousands of members of the public to his talks each time he has visited Hong Kong over the past twenty years or so. The late mainland Chinese Zen Master Shengyan's Taiwan-based Dharma Drum Mountain, and the Taiwan nun, the Ven. Zhengyan's Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Association are also represented in Hong Kong. Over the past ten years, the Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, advocate of 'Engaged Buddhism' has become increasingly popular in Hong Kong, attracting an audience of more than 8,000 people at his public talk in Hong Kong in November 2010, given in English, with Chinese translation. And the Plum Village Mindfulness Practice Centre Hong Kong, now with resident monks from the Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh's Order of Interbeing, was established in Kowloon in 2005.

Apart from Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, Korean Zen (*Son*) is practiced in Hong Kong. The Su Bong Zen Monastery, a branch of the international Kwan Um School of Zen, founded by the late Korean Zen Master Seung Sahn, was established in Hong Kong in 1992 and now has a thriving monastery/practice centre on Hong Kong Island, and a retreat centre, the Gak Su Mountain Temple, on Lantau Island. In addition to meditation and chanting, koan (*kong-an*) interviews are also held at Su Bong, the only Zen Buddhist centre in Hong Kong to do this.[17] Japanese Mahayana Buddhism is represented too, with a branch of Soka Gakkai International, established in Hong Kong since 1961.

Tibetan Buddhism has become well represented in Hong Kong since about the 1980s. The Nyingma, Dzogchen, Sakya, Kagyu (various lineages), Gelug and the New Kadampa Tradition schools are all represented, with Kagyu apparently attracting the greatest number of followers. There are thirty centres run by Tibetan monks from the various schools, ranging from quite small to large, for Hong Kong's Tibetan Buddhist practitioners.[18] Senior lamas from all schools regularly visit Hong Kong, giving public talks as well as conducting various ceremonies for their disciples. But His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama has never visited Hong Kong and is unlikely to be permitted to visit. Apart from Tibetan Buddhism, there is also a small Tibetan *Bon* practice centre in Hong Kong.

Theravada Buddhism is also represented in Hong Kong, but probably the least so of the three major traditions. There are two Thai Buddhist temples in Hong Kong, both in the New Territories, which cater for followers of all the Theravada traditions, as there are no specifically Sri Lankan or Burmese Buddhism temples. There are also a number of Vipassana meditation centres, in the traditions of a number of Burmese meditation teachers, where the emphasis is on meditation, rather than on Buddhism.

A non-sectarian Buddhist centre was established in 2005, the Buddhist Lodge of Laity, on Hong Kong Island, which strives to promote the integration of Buddhist teachings into contemporary life. The centre provides meditation facilities and regularly invites Buddhist masters and teachers from the different Buddhist traditions to give talks on various aspects of Buddhist teaching.[19]

Another Buddhist centre of note is Wang Fat Ching Ser in the New Territories, built as a meditation retreat in

1938. It was acquired in 1960 by Tung Lin Kok Yuen, an important lay Buddhist organization in Hong Kong since before the Second World War. In the late 1960s it was leased to the Hong Kong Buddhist College; it was leased to Fo Guang Shan in 1998, and to the Centre of Buddhist Studies of The University of Hong Kong in 2004. It is now the operations base of the *Buddhistdoor* website, established by Tung Lin Kok Yuen. It also hosts a number of regular Buddhist activities, in the different Buddhist traditions and some of a non-sectarian nature.

Buddhist Leadership

In the early twentieth century, although Buddhism was starting to become popular in Hong Kong following the Buddhist revival and reformation movement in China led by the Ven. Taixu, which had spread to Hong Kong, Buddhists in Hong Kong, were not well organized and there was no Buddhist headquarters or association to take on a leadership role. However, with the establishment of Tung Lin Kok Yuen in 1935 this changed. Tung Lin Kok Yuen was founded by Lady Clara Ho Tung, Eurasian wife of a wealthy Eurasian *comprador*, with the wish of making it the local Buddhist headquarters to propagate Buddhism and to promote Buddhist education. Its headquarters building on Hong Kong Island, built in the Chinese Renaissance architectural style (a combination of traditional Chinese and Western styles), also housed the private family temple. Until the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong in 1941, Tung Lin Kok Yuen, in practice, provided the leadership role for Buddhists in Hong Kong, and hosted many public Buddhist activities and founded a number of Buddhist primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong and Macau (on the western bank of the Pearl River estuary), with special emphasis being placed on the education of girls and nuns, and provided for the disadvantaged, the infirm and the handicapped.[20]

In 1945, after the end of the Japanese occupation, the Hong Kong Buddhist Association was founded by a number of prominent monks and nuns (including the abbot of Po Lin Monastery, the Ven. Fat Ho, the abbess of Chi Lin Nunnery and the Ven. Kok Kwong), and three lay men and women (two of whom were from Tung Lin Kok Yuen), who had all resided in Hong Kong before the war. The first chairman of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association was the Ven. Fat Ho, a mainland *Chan* monk from Guangdong Province, and abbot of Po Lin Monastery; the next three chairmen were *Tiantai* monks. The Ven. Fat Ho returned as chairman from 1955-1966, after which the Ven. Kok Kwong, a mainland Chinese *Tiantai* monk from Inner Mongolia took over as president (previously known as chairman), and has remained as president for forty-five years to date (2011). The current vice-president, the Ven. Wing Sing, is also a *Tiantai* monk from Inner Mongolia. The Hong Kong Buddhist Association has founded many primary and secondary schools, kindergartens, a youth camp, many homes for the aged, a hospital and a cemetery, and also organizes many Buddhist activities and events in Hong Kong. It also represents Hong Kong Buddhism in various international Buddhist organizations, organizes Hong Kong-wide Buddhist celebrations and activities, and conducts ordinations of both monks and nuns. However, it is not the only Buddhist organization in Hong Kong, though maybe the most important, and there are many others, most being members of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association, though not all. Membership of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association is not mandatory for monastics, nor for Buddhist associations, and some choose not to join. It is seen by some as a figurehead organization, and organizer of Buddhist ceremonial, rather than as the leader of Buddhism in Hong Kong.

The role of the leadership of Hong Kong Buddhism has now been assumed again, *de facto*, by Tung Lin Kok Yuen, which had adopted a fairly low profile following the establishment of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association in 1945, for reasons which are not clear. Today, following a decline in the influence of the Hong Kong Buddhist Association in recent years, as it did not keep up with the changes which were taking place in Buddhism in Hong Kong and the world and did not move with the times, Tung Lin Kok Yuen has taken up the role of leadership of Hong Kong Buddhism again, apparently by default. Tung Lin Kok Yuen, apart from continuing with its traditional role in primary and secondary education, and charitable works, has, in recent years, moved towards the establishment and support of Buddhist studies programmes in higher education institutions in Hong Kong (the Centre of Buddhist Studies at the University of Hong Kong), Thailand and Canada (in conjunction with the Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canada Foundation). It promotes Buddhism in Hong Kong and Canada, through lectures by prominent Buddhist monastics and lay teachers, and it promotes Buddhist art, culture and literature, as well as publishing Buddhist material. In 2006 it launched *Buddhistdoor*, a Buddhist website, with the help of the Centre of Buddhist Studies at The University of Hong Kong.[21] Through its proactive involvement in Buddhism, and its modern approach, Tung Lin Kok Yuen is seen by many to be the present-day leader of Buddhism in Hong Kong, reprising its role in the pre-war years.

Buddhist Education

Mention has been made above of the Centre of Buddhist Studies at The University of Hong Kong. The Centre was established in 2000, by donations, from three major organizations, one of which was Tung Lin Kok Yuen, and is self-funded. The Centre now runs undergraduate elective courses, the taught Master of Buddhist Studies (MBuddhStud) degree programme, and research Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree programmes. It aims to promote academic studies and in-depth research of Buddhism in Hong Kong, mainland China and the region.[22] It also organizes visits and talks by prominent Buddhists from overseas, often in conjunction with Tung Lin Kok Yuen, including the visit in November 2011 by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong set up the Centre for the Study of Humanistic Buddhism in the Department of Cultural and Religious Studies in 2005, supported by the Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education. The Centre runs diploma and higher diploma courses in Buddhist Culture, and includes Buddhist studies as a subject area in its Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy degree courses and programmes in Religious Studies. The Centre also publishes the bilingual (Chinese and English) International Journal for the Study of Humanistic Buddhism.[23]

Apart from the two universities referred to above, a number of Hong Kong monasteries, various Buddhist organizations, Chi Lin Nunnery, Tung Lin Kok Yuen and Wang Fat Ching Ser also run Buddhist courses, and Pali and Sanskrit language courses at various levels below degree level. There are also a number of Buddhist libraries and good Buddhist bookshops in Hong Kong. And many Buddhist monasteries, nunneries and organizations run primary and secondary schools, which in addition to teaching the normal academic subjects, also teach Buddhism as a subject to their students. Many also run kindergartens, too.

Buddhist Media

Buddhism and information about Buddhist activities is also propagated through the media. The Chinese language "Buddhist Compassion Bi-Weekly", a popular magazine, sold throughout Hong Kong, has been published since 1999 and contains interviews with prominent Buddhist monastics and members of the laity in Hong Kong, interviews with visiting overseas Buddhist leaders and teachers, articles about the various traditions of Buddhism and Buddhist monasteries, nunneries and temples in Hong Kong and overseas, Buddhist culture and Buddhist arts, information on forthcoming Buddhist activities and events in Hong Kong, information about Buddhist vegetarian restaurants in Hong Kong and even recipes for Buddhist vegetarian food.[24] It has become, since its foundation, perhaps the most important Buddhist magazine in Hong Kong, though other Buddhist organizations in Hong Kong publish magazines and newsletters too, for example, "Buddhism in Hong Kong", published by the Hong Kong Buddhist Association.

Buddhistdoor, set up in 2006 by Tung Lin Kok Yuen and now operating from Wang Fat Ching Ser in the New Territories, has since become one of the largest Buddhist portals in the world. It aims to use 'E-Buddhist learning' to suit the needs of the 'cyber generation' in spreading the teachings of the Buddha, covering a broad range of doctrines and practices from all of the Buddhist traditions. The website also includes regularly updated news, a video channel, an audio channel, a weekly newsletter, the quarterly *Bodhi Journal*, a very comprehensive Buddhist dictionary, in English, Chinese, Pali and Sanskrit, a Dhamma forum and a blog.[25] *Buddhadoor* is, indeed, Hong Kong's 'cyber-temple' and a most important contribution to Buddhism in Hong Kong.

Conclusion

Buddhism in Hong Kong in the early twenty-first century is thriving and diverse, though in ways that could never have been dreamed of in the early twentieth century, or even since the 1980s, when Buddhism in Hong Kong started to change. Although traditional Buddhism still exists in Hong Kong, in its various lineages, schools and sects, more and more people, particularly the younger ones, are looking to a more modern Buddhism, either in addition to, or as an alternative to traditional Buddhism to suit the lifestyles of twenty-first century Hong Kong. *Buddhadoor*, Hong Kong's cyber-temple, has risen to the challenge to meet this need. Apart from traditional monasteries like Po Lin Monastery and Chi Lin Nunnery, which continue to attract large numbers of the faithful, the Engaged Buddhism of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh is becoming increasingly popular, as the 8,000 strong audience at his November 2010 public talk attests. Buddhism is now increasingly being studied as an academic subject, as a growing number of people want more from Buddhism than just chanting or meditating. Where then is the leadership of the Hong Buddhist community amidst these changes? In the author's view, the Hong Kong Buddhist Association, while still the ceremonial figurehead leader of Hong Kong Buddhism, has not moved sufficiently far or fast enough with the times and has not adapted to the modern Buddhism that many people in Hong Kong want. Tung Lin Kok Yuen has stepped into the breach and is now the *de facto* leader of Buddhism in Hong Kong.

Notes

1 In March 1998, the Chinese Buddhist Association officially designated 2 BCE (in the reign of the Western Han Dynasty emperor, Aidi [reigned 7 BCE to 1 CE]), as the beginning of Chinese Buddhism and sent out a circular that year notifying the Buddhist associations in all of China's provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions of its decision. See the *People's Republic of China Yearbook 1999*, pp. 463-464. Prior to this official Chinese directive, Buddhism was said to have arrived in China, via the Silk Road, in the first century CE, during the reign of the Eastern Han Dynasty emperor, Mingdi (reigned 57-75 CE). Other accounts, almost certainly legendary, give various dates before the Common Era for Buddhism's arrival in China, the earliest of which was in the 4th century BCE. See Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, First Princeton Paperback Edition. 1973), pp. 27-31.

2 See *Xianggang fanyu* (Hong Kong: Liyuan Shubaoshe Youxianggongsi, 1999), p.178.

3 Ibid. pp. 14-15.

4 Ibid, pp. 208-211.

5 See Wong Lai-kuan, Betty, *Tung Lin Kok Yuen: Buddhist Reform in Pre-War Hong Kong* (unpublished M.Phil thesis, The University of Hong Kong, 1999) pp.69-70 and 80-83.

6 See Don A. Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), p.262.

7 A term used by a Hong Kong Chinese monk the author interviewed in 2002. But also see *Daguang laoheshang yuanjisanzhounianjinianji* (Hong Kong: Qianhua Lianshe, 2000), p.22.

8 See Don A. Pitman, *op.cit* p. 261.

9 According to the Hong Kong Buddhist Association, in an exchange of emails and a follow-up telephone conversation, the author had on 25 and 26 January 1997, there were 291 monks and 864 nuns registered with the Hong Kong Buddhist Association. However, he said that these numbers could be increased by about 20% for the actual numbers of monastics in Hong Kong, as not all monastics in Hong Kong registered themselves with the association, and many were in transit, rather than being resident.

10 Information provided to the author by the publisher of the Chinese language *Buddhist Compassion Bi-Weekly* on 27 January 2011, in an exchange of emails.

11 See *Hong Kong 2009* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong SAR Government, 2010) p. 368, and www.censtatd.gov.hk [accessed on 27 January 2011].

12 Information provided by the Hong Kong Buddhist Association to the author on 26 January 2011.

13 See www.plm.org.hk [accessed on 23 January 2011].

14 See www.tourism.gov.hk [accessed on 28 January 2011].

15 Collated from various leaflets produced by the Chi Lin Nunnery and the Hong Kong Government, and from various internet sources.

16 See www.censtatd.gov.hk [accessed on 27 January 2011].

17 Collated from various leaflets produced by the Su Bong Zen Monastery.

18 Information provided to the author by the publisher of *Buddhist Compassion Bi-Weekly* on 27 January 2011, in an exchange of emails.

19 See www.laybuddhist.com [accessed on 24 January 2011].

20 See Wong Lai-kuan, Betty, *op cit*, pp.121-124.

21 See *Tung Lin Kok Yuen* and *Buddhistdoor* at buddhistdoor.com [accessed on 28 January 2011].

22 See *Centre of Buddhist Studies*, The University of Hong, published by The University of Hong Kong, and www.buddhism.hku.hk .

23 See Ankur Barua *et al*, *Buddhism Flourishes in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Buddhist Door, Tung Lin Kok Yuen, Hong Kong, 2010), pp.35-36, and www.cuhk.edu.hk/crs/cshb [accessed on 24 January 2011].

24 See buddhistcompassion.org [accessed on 28 January 2011].

25 See www.buddhistdoor.com [accessed on 28 January 2011].

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Kenneth Ch'en, Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, First Princeton Paperback Edition. 1973), pp. 27-31.

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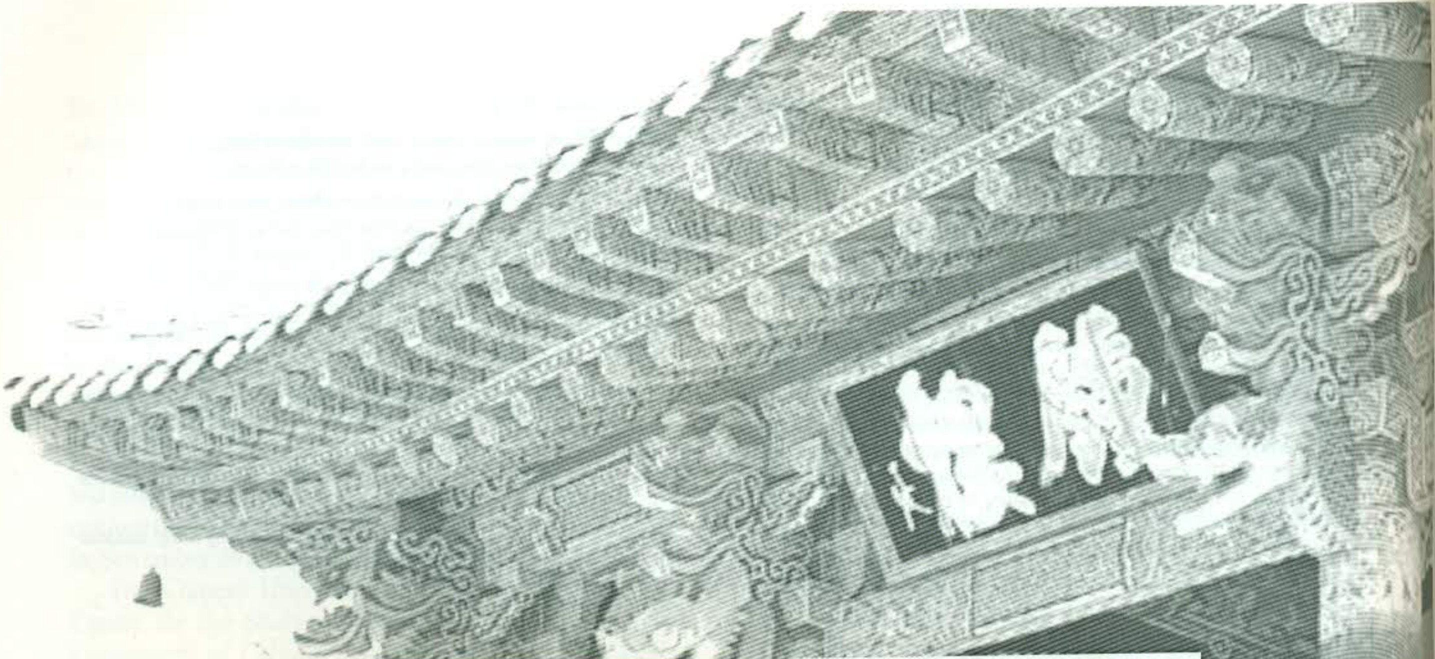
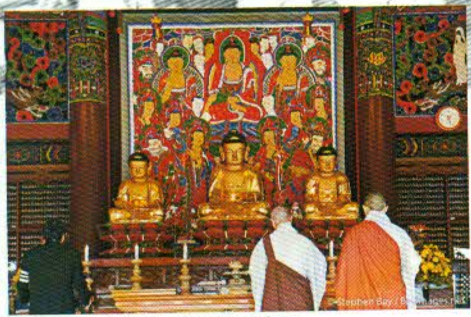


33 m high Brass Statue Beopjusa Temple



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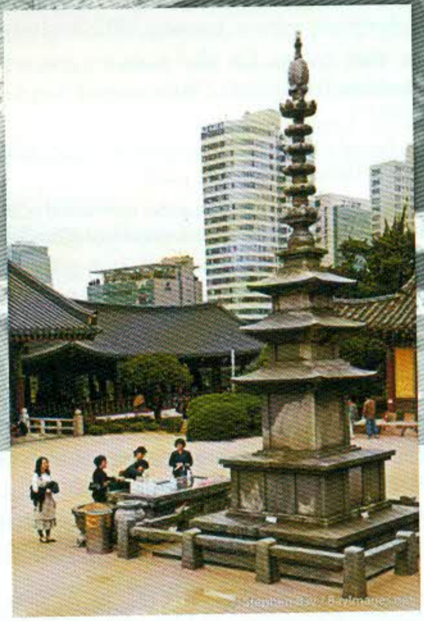
Sakyamuni Buddha - Daewoongleon

Hyangwoh -Jeong, S.C



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Stone Pagoda

Tongdo-sa Korea's largest monastic complex

ESSAY 20

Buddhism in Korea

(The first part of this separately-authored essay covers organizational and historical aspects of Korean Buddhism, while the second covers doctrinal and philosophical aspects.)

1. The History of Korean Buddhism

Ko Young-seop
(Translated by Jhin Jean Wookee)

Introduction

Korea embraced both Indian Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism. The Goguryeo Kingdom embraced Buddhism in 372 - the second year of the reign of King Sosurim-wang - by welcoming Bhikkhu Shundao, an envoy sent by King Fujian of the Former Jin Dynasty, and by accepting the Buddha statues and sutras he brought with him. The efforts to introduce Buddhism into Korea continued via such Chinese monks as Fashen, Yiyuan, and Tanyan. In 374, two years after Shundao's arrival, Bhikkhu Adao came from the Eastern Jin Dynasty to spread Buddhism. The royal court of Goguryeo built the two temples of Chomun-sa and Ibullan-sa to house Shundao and Adao respectively. By then, Goguryeo had adopted the Three Jewels of Buddhism.

The Baekje Kingdom embraced Buddhism in 384 - the first year of the reign of King Chimnyu - by welcoming the Indian monk Marananta, who had travelled from the Eastern Jin Dynasty of China. King Chimnyu personally went to the outskirts of the capital to meet Marananta, had him stay in the royal palace, and requested his teachings. In February of the next year, the royal court built a temple in the new capital of Hansanju and ten monks were ordained. Baekje's seventeenth king, Asin-wang, issued a royal decree to "highly uphold Buddhism and seek its blessings." As the king favored Buddhism, he carried out many Buddhist works on a large scale and personally upheld and practiced the religion. Thanks to his efforts, Buddhism began to spread far and wide.

Unlike Goguryeo and Baekje, which were introduced to Buddhism via China, the Gaya Kingdom received Buddhism directly from India. The founding king, Suro-wang (42-199), had married an Indian woman named Heo Hwang-ok, who is said to have brought a stone pagoda named "Basa" from India when she came to Gaya by ship. However, it is a stretch of the imagination to regard this incident as the beginning of Buddhism in Gaya. In addition to the pagoda, traces of Buddhism can be found in the story surrounding the establishment of the Gaya capital, as well as in the legends of the Maneo-sa Temple, Jungyu-sa Temple and Chilbur-am Hermitage. In 452, the second year of his reign, the eighth Gaya king, Jilji-wang, built the Hwanghu-sa Temple on the site where King Sura-wang and Queen Heo were married. He did this to bring blessings to the deceased Queen Heo. He also gave ten *gyeols* of flat land to Hwanghu-sa Temple as an offering to the Three Jewels of Buddhism. This was the first instance in Korea of Buddhist works being carried out by the royal court.

The Silla Kingdom, one of the Three Kingdoms of Korea, and one of the longest sustained dynasties in Asian history, has contradictory records regarding the inception of Buddhism. Two different names are attributed to the Chinese envoy who introduced Buddhism, one being Bhikkhu Adao and the other Sramana Mohuzi. The year of Buddhism's arrival also varies. One record says it was in 263 in the second year of the reign of the thirteenth king, Michu-wang. Another record says it was during the reign of the nineteenth king, Nulji-wang (417-458). A third record says it was during the reign of the twenty-first king, Bicheo-wang (479-499), and still a fourth record says it was in 527 in the fourteenth year of the reign of the twenty-third king, Beopeung-wang. If we interpret the names of the two Chinese envoys as common nouns, "Adao" means "a person who has shaved his head," and "Mohuzi" means "an alien who has a dark face," then we can infer that Buddhism was already in the Silla Kingdom during the reign of Michu-wang. However, more time transpired before it was embraced at the state level. When the Silla monk, Lee Cha-don, was killed for his Buddhist beliefs during the reign of King Beopeung-wang, Buddhism finally gained official recognition in Silla.

The Daebarae Dynasty (698-926), which succeeded the Goguryeo Dynasty, believed in Buddhism as well. According to the Chinese document titled *Cefu Yuangui*, a prince of Daebarae came to China in December 713 requesting to form a trade relationship and to visit a temple to pay homage, which indicates Daebarae already had some contact with Buddhism at that time. The same document indicates that in 814 the 7th Daebarae king, Daewonyu, dispatched a delegation of 37 people headed by an envoy, Go Ye-jin, to China, offered tribute, and presented two Buddhist statues, one gold, one silver. A Japanese document titled *Zoku Nihongi*, indicates that an earlier Daebarae delegation headed by Sa Do-mong returned with many precious gifts offered by Japan in 777, one being "four packages of crystal prayer beads." And the *Nihon Koki* says that a monk named Seok In-jin came with another delegation as a scribe to document the mission headed by Wang Hyo-ryeom in 814.

In addition, the Japanese historical text titled *Ryuizyu Kokushi* says that Yeo Jeongnim, one of the Daebarae envoys who landed on the shore of the Japanese kingdom of Dewa, presented a letter written by the Daebarae monk Yeongchung who was studying in Tang Dynasty China at that time. The *Record of Travels in the Tang while Seeking the Dharma*, written by the Japanese monk Ennin, relates the following: "The Japanese royal court entrusted the Daebarae delegation to present one hundred geums of gold to the tripitaka master Yeongsan who participated in the translation project of the *Dasheng benshengxindiguan jing* headed by Daebarae monk Jeongso." These records suggest that the Buddhist-influenced Daebarae court had a friendly give and take relationship with Japan and the Tang court.

In conclusion, the historical records of ancient Korea provide clear evidence that Buddhism was introduced to Korea by way of both China and India.

The Establishment of Buddhist Schools in Korea

The establishment of Buddhist schools in Korea began first in Goguryeo, which officially recognized Buddhism before Korea's other kingdoms. Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty invited the Goguryeo monk Seungnang (Chi. Senglang, fifth-sixth century) to his palace in admiration of his scholarship and virtues, but, under pretext of illness, Seungnang declined. So the emperor sent ten outstanding scholar-monks to study under his tutelage. It is said that nine of the monks were not diligent students, and only Seungjeon (Chi. Sengquan) was able to inherit the Dharma of Seungnang. Only Seungjeon, originally from Goguryeo, studied hard enough to inherit the lineage. Seungjeon passed on his Sanlun studies to Falang, who in turn passed it on to Jizang and the Baekje monk Hyegyun.

Seungnang and Seungjeon created a watershed in Sanlun history; the era before them is now referred to as "old doctrine," while the era which followed is called "new doctrine." The old doctrine succeeded Kumarajiva (343-413), and its proponents include: Sengrui, Sengzhao and Tanying from the Changan area, and Daolang (a miswriting of Seungnang) from the Hexi area. The new doctrine began with Seungnang and Seungjeon and was passed on to Falang and Jizang, who developed it further. In this way, the Goguryeo monk Seungnang laid down a new foundation for the study of Chinese Buddhism by presenting a new methodology of Buddhist studies. Seungnang pointed out that the doctrine of the Satyasiddhi School, which expounded the existence of self-nature, belonged to Hinayana, and that Sanlun studies, which expounded the non-existence of self-nature, belonged to Mahayana.

Yeongtap Bodeak (seventh century), who was renowned in Goguryeo for his studies of the *Nirvana Sutra* and the *Vaitulya Sutra*, had eleven prominent disciples. They were: (1) Musang from Geumdong-sa and his disciple Geumchwi; (2) Jeongmyeol from Jingu-sa; (3) Uiyung from Jingu-sa; (4) Jisu from Daeseung-sa; (5) Ilseung from Daewon-sa and his disciples Simjeong and Daewon; (6) Sujeong from Yuma-sa; (7) Sadae from Jungdae-sa and his disciple Gyeyuk; (8) Gaewon from Gaewon-sa; (9) Myeongdeok from Yeongu-sa; (10) Gaesim from an unknown temple; and (11) Bomyeong from another unknown temple. Yeongtap Bodeak appears to have had quite a number of disciples, from which it can be inferred that his expertise on the *Nirvana Sutra* must have had a unique line of scholastic tradition apart from the Chinese tradition. It is especially noteworthy that Bodeok's scholastic tradition was formed after that of Southern China ceased. Thus, the scholastic tradition of Sheling, established by Seungnang and Seungjeon, based on ideas about the precepts and the ten stages, greatly blossomed into Bodeok's studies of the *Nirvana Sutra* and the *Vaitulya Sutra*. Although Bodeok's writings no longer exist, his scholastic achievements are obvious when viewing the records of his disciples and of the temples he resided at.

Gyeomik, the great monk of the Baekje Kingdom, went to India in 526 to study Buddhism. After five years he returned with the Tripitaka master Bae Dalda. He also brought back the Abhidharma pitaka and the vinaya texts of the five schools, which he translated and taught. Thus, he made it possible for Baekje to research all of the vinaya texts of the five schools about a century ahead of China. Although the record of his vinaya lineage no longer exists, it can be assumed that the scholastic lineage formed by his disciples was solid. This also seems to have established a theoretical foundation for the ensuing

Buddhist studies of precepts, Sanlun, the *Satyasiddhi Sastra*, and the *Lotus Sutra*. When the Baekje monk Hyeongwang stayed in China, Huimin became renowned for receiving Hyeongwang's four means of attaining peace and the Dharma flower samadhi. The details of how Hyeongwang passed on his scholastic tradition are not known, but it seems that his expertise on the *Lotus Sutra* and his practice of the Dharma flower samadhi were passed on to Hyehyeon of Baekje and Yeongwang of the Silla Kingdom.

The Silla monk Muna Woncheuk (613-696) stayed for an extended period at the Ximing-si Temple in Changan during the Tang Dynasty and established the scholastic lineage named Ximing. It was a tradition which was opposed scholastically to the Cien tradition, whose lineage consisted of Xuanzang, Kuiji, Huizhao, and Zhizhou. Often called the "Yogacara tradition of Silla," Woncheuk's scholastic tradition continued through Seungjang,, who was originally from Silla but remained in China, Dojeung (620-700), who returned to Silla, and Taehyeon (680-764). The tradition was further passed on to Yeongtae, Hoeam, Ungwon, and Guam. However, there seems to be room for further research about whether it was passed on to Doryun and Gyeondeung. The Ximing scholastic tradition of Silla was transmitted to Tankuang of the Tang Dynasty, to Chosgrub of Tibet, and to Gyosei, Teizumi, Terutoi, and Sasetoru of Japan.

The Silla monk Bunhwang Wonhyo (617-686) had nine outstanding disciples who succeeded his scholastic tradition, two being Hyeunyung and Sabok as inscribed on the stone tablet of Goseon-sa Temple in Wonhyo's honor. According to the *Samguk Yusa* (*The Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms*), Uisang (625-702) had ten excellent disciples: Ojin, Jitong, Pyohun, Jinjeong, Jinjang, Doyung, Yangwon, Sangwon, Neungin, and Uijeok. Uisang also had 3,000 other disciples whose names are unknown. His Buseok scholastic tradition established itself as one of the main scholastic traditions in the history of Korean Buddhism.

Seon Dharma was introduced to Korea in the middle of the Unified Silla Dynasty. Around the time Silla ended and Goryeo began, nine schools of Korean Seon, known collectively as "Gusan Seonmun," were established around Korea. Gusan Seonmun continued the tradition of Seon practice, which differs from doctrinal studies. Gaji Sanmun, founded by national master Doui, and Sagul Sanmun, by national master Beomil, represented the Seon lineage of the Goryeo Dynasty. Gaji Sanmun continued its tradition through such eminent monks as Iryeon (1206-1286) and Taego (1301-1382), while Sagul Sanmun was passed down through Jinul (1158-1210) and Naong (1320-1376). During the mid-Goryeo Dynasty, Uicheon established the Cheontae Order and laid a foundation for that order's Buddhist studies. His disciples stayed at Seonbon-sa in Chilgok and formulated the scholastic tradition of the order.

Jinul organized a community named Jeonghye Gyeolsa, which cultivated both concentration and wisdom. In this way, he prevented a confrontation between Seon schools and doctrinal schools, further solidifying the foundation of Goryeo Buddhism. Later, his disciple, Jingak Hyesim, established the Bojo tradition along with the sixteen national masters produced by Songgwang-sa Temple. Other traditions that distinguished themselves in Goryeo are: Hwaeom (Huayan), Yuga (Yogacara), Seon, Cheontae (Tiantai), and Yureop. At the end of Goryeo, Buddhism split into eleven orders because Goryeo's Buddhist orders and schools were not regulated by any central organization.

Buddhism began to be closely regulated by the Joseon Dynasty government, which adopted Confucianism as the state ideology. During the reign of King Taejong, the eleven Buddhist orders were reduced to seven, and in the reign of King Sejong, they were reduced to two, the Seon School and the Doctrinal School. By the time of King Yeonsan-gun, the Buddhist order and the state examination for Buddhist monks had disappeared. During the reign of King Jungjong, the government's regulation of ordination and its issuance of licenses for monks and nuns was abolished. Then the Buddhist landscape began to incline toward Seon Dharma, and this lasted until the end of the Korean Empire. The Seon lineage of Cheongheo Hyujeong represented the Joseon era, while that of Gyeongheo and Yongseong represented the era of the Korean Empire.

At present, the main tradition of Korean Buddhism is the lineage which began with Doui at the end of the Silla Dynasty, which was passed onto Jinul, Taego, and Naong of Goryeo, and then passed onto Hyujeong, Gyeongheo, and Yongseong. In addition, two scholastic traditions still coexist. One is the Hwaeom tradition, which began with Gyeongheo, and then passed onto Hanam, Tanheo, Mubi, Gakseong, Hyegeo, and Tonggwang. The other is the Neungeom tradition which was passed down through Unheo and Worun.

The Organization of the Sangha

"Sangha" refers to the entire Buddhist community, which consists of both monastics and lay believers. When Buddhism first came to Korea, all components of the Three Jewels of Buddhism were established: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. After Buddhism was officially recognized by the state, monastic communities for bhikkhus and bhikkhunis were formed in the four kingdoms of Goguryeo, Baekje, Gaya, and Silla, as well as the later Unified Silla Dynasty and Daebarae Dynasty. Eventually, Buddhists were subdivided into four groups: bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, lay male Buddhists (upasaka) and lay female Buddhists (upasika). The sangha of Goguryeo was run more systematically after Uiyeon imported vinaya disciplines and the administrative system of the sangha from the Northern Qi Dynasty. The sangha of Baekje also solidified its system through the vinaya texts of the five schools which Gyeomik brought from India when he returned home in 531 after completing his five-year study in India. Nothing is known about the sangha of Gaya. Silla seemed to have recognized the sangha after its official recognition of Buddhism in 527.

Silla employed the administrative system of the sangha to manage the Buddhist orders. In 551 Silla appointed Hyeryang as the superintendent monk. He had come from Goguryeo, accompanied by Geochilbu, and became a naturalized citizen. In addition, the royal court created the positions of Daedo-yuna and Doyu-narang under the superintendent to manage the bhikkhu and bhikkhuni orders respectively. When Jajang returned from China during the war to unify the three kingdoms, the position of monk superintendent gave way to a system organized under a national superintendent. The royal court appointed one national superintendent for the whole nation, nine state superintendents, and eighteen provincial superintendents. Daebarae also seems to have established a formalized sangha structure as it embraced Buddhism in the mid-eighth century and utilized the sangha's administrative system.

At the beginning of the Goryeo Dynasty, state examinations were held to select talented people for government positions, and Buddhist monks applied for Buddhist administrative positions. The monk superintendent of Goryeo was the highest position in the hierarchy of the doctrinal schools. When a monk passed the state examination, he became eligible for the following positions in ascending order: Daeseon, Daedeok, Daesa, Jungdaesa, Samjung-daesa, Sujwa, and Seungtong (monk superintendent). Uicheon, aka "National Master Daegak,"who was the 4th son of the Goryeo King Munjong, became the monk superintendent at the age of thirteen. However, that position disappeared by the mid-Joseon Dynasty when the various Buddhist orders were either integrated or abolished. However, the system was restored by Queen Munjeong and monk Bou during the reign of Myeongjong and it persisted thereafter. Until the end of the Joseon Dynasty, there was a monk superintendent position in large temples to handle monastic administration. However, the responsibilities of monk superintendents were eventually drastically reduced so that they could only process the administrative work of the temple they belonged to.

The Buddhist sangha of Korea took the designation "eop" (specialized learning institute) at the beginning of Goryeo, and then "jong" (order) in the mid-Goryeo. Buddhist orders were established based on three components: its founder, doctrine, and followers. They further established themselves relying on practice and direct experiences based on faith and understanding with the help of these learning institutes. The major learning institutes of the early Goryeo era included Hwaeom-eop, Yuga-eop, and Yur-eop. The major orders of the mid-Goryeo era included the Jogye-jong and the Seonjeok-jong. At the end of the Goryeo era, they split into eleven orders. These eleven Buddhist orders of the early Joseon era, consisting of 242 temples, included: Jogye, Chongji, Cheontae-soja, Cheontae-beopsa, Hwaeom, Domun, Jaeun, Jungdo, Sinin, Namsan, and Siheung. King Taejong reduced their numbers to seven: Jogye, Cheontae (Cheontae-soja + Cheontae-beopsa), Hwaeom, Jaeun, Jungsin (Jungdo + Sinin), Chongnam and Siheung. These seven orders were later reduced to two, the Seon School (Jogye + Cheontae + Chongnam) and the Doctrinal School (Hwaeom + Jaeun + Jungsin + Siheung). Thus, the Joseon Dynasty downsized the Buddhist orders all over the nation, which resulted in thirty-six temples, 7,950 *gyeols* of temple land, and 3,770 monks and nuns. To be more specific, the Seon School was left with eighteen temples, 4,250 *gyeols* of land, and 1,970 monks and nuns, while the Doctrinal School was left with eighteen temples, 3,700 *gyeols* of land, and 1,800 monks and nuns. Heungcheon-sa Temple in Seoul was designated as the central temple of the Seon School while Heungdeok-sa Temple as that of the Doctrinal School. The Joseon government reduced the number of temples, as well as the number of monks and nuns. It also confiscated temple lands and slaves making them available to the military and for official works. In addition, the system of royal preceptors and national masters was abolished, the licensing of monks was strictly enforced, and the tradition of designating temples to tend to the spirits of deceased royalty and their graves was banned. King Yeonsan-gun abolished the state examination for monks, which had played a central role in selecting talented people. King Jungjong abolished the issuance of "docheop," the identification card for Buddhist monks and nuns, which had been in effect since King Chungsugwang of Goryeo. He also disposed of all regulations regarding ordination from the *Gyeonguk Daejeon*, the laws and ordinances of the Joseon government.

During the mid-Joseon era, Queen Munjeong revived Buddhism by appointing the monk Bou. He successfully restored the Seon School, the Doctrinal School, and the state examination for monks. By re-instating the ordination regulations and the issuance of monastic identification cards, he re-established the status of monks. The restored state examinations produced some eminent monks such as Hyujeong, Yujeong, and Buhyu Seonsu, who helped to lay the foundation of Korean Buddhism in later years. The increased presence of Korean Buddhist orders eventually enabled a nationwide, voluntary establishment of monk armies when crisis loomed. During times of crisis, Buddhism found a way to establish itself as a protector of the nation by raising armies of monks. The invasions of Japan and Qing China served as catalysts to reassert the presence of Buddhism in Neo-Confucianism-oriented Joseon. By the decree of King Seonjo and the manifesto issued by the monk Hyujeong, a "monk army" was established. After the monk army recaptured Cheongju-seong Fortress and Haengjusan-seong Fortress, the tide of the war turned. As a result, Hyujeong and his disciples Samyeong, Giheo, Cheoyeong, and Uieom began to rethink the social function of Buddhism. Even though they were monks who regarded the precept of not killing foremost, their fight to save their country was due to their genuine love for their nation. At the same time, they saw it as the only way to reaffirm their presence under the elitist attitudes of the Joseon Dynasty's Confucian scholars and statesmen. After the invasions, the Joseon government's policy toward Buddhism eased somewhat in comparison to earlier years. The presence of bhikkhunis was no less than that of bhikkhus in Korean Buddhist history, though outwardly, it may have appeared so. The ordination of bhikkhunis was practiced in all Korean kingdoms and subsequent dynasties after Buddhism arrived. Royal families produced bhikkhunis too. In the Silla Kingdom, King Beopeung-wang and his wife (Dharma names: Beopgong, Myobeop) and King Jineung-wang and his wife (Dharma names: Beobun, Myoju) became bhikkhus and bhikkhunis in the later years of their lives.

At the end of Goryeo, Queen Hyebin, the second wife of King Gongmin-wang was ordained as a bhikkhuni and served as the first abbess of Jeongeob-won Temple until passing away in 1408. Especially in Joseon, many royal women and aristocratic women entered monastic life and stayed in the Insu-won or Jasu-won Temples located in the palace or in the bhikkhuni temple Jeongeob-won. These women included queens, royal concubines, princesses and noble women. They either served as abbesses of Jeongeob-won or were spiritual advisors to the royal family, forming a close relationship with them, thereby forming a pillar of the Buddhist sangha. Bhikkhunis from common backgrounds also fulfilled their roles in passing down some important features of the living culture of Joseon such as paper manufacturing and temple food. The Bomun Order of Korean Buddhism, the one and only bhikkhuni order in the world, which was established in 1972, clearly attests to this valiant tradition.

The Joseon Dynasty banned Buddhist monks and nuns from entering its capital at Hanyang. The only exceptions were monks who had been students of the Confucian Academy or their descendants. In 1876, Joseon was forced to open its doors to foreigners because of the Ganghwa-do Treaty it signed with Japan. At that time, Joseon was in conflict between the closed-door policy of Daewon-gun, the father of the Emperor Gojong, and the open-door policy of the Empress Myeongseong. In 1895, Joseon embraced the suggestion of Sano Zenrei, a Japanese monk from the Ichiren Order, and lifted the ban prohibiting monks and nuns from entering the capital. Joseon's monastic Buddhists were then able to enter the capital freely for about a year, until the ban was restored in 1896. The ban was lifted again in 1897. Until 1910 when Japan completely stripped away Joseon's sovereignty, the ban kept coming and going.

In the midst of this turmoil, the Buddhism of the Korean Empire began with the establishment of Wonheung-sa Temple in 1899. The government installed in the temple an administrative office under the supervision of the Imperial Household Agency to manage the Buddhist community. When the administrative office was abolished two years later, monks organized the Buddhist Research Institute in Wonheung-sa to develop a new interpretation of Buddhism. This served as a foundation to establish the Myeongjin School (the predecessor of Dongguk University), a modern educational institution. In 1908, fifty-two monks who represented Korea's Buddhist communities gathered at Wonheung-sa and established the Won Order of Joseon Buddhism. The Supreme Patriarch Lee Hoe-gwang (1862~1933) subsequently visited Japan and decided to sign an agreement to become a subservient ally of Japan's Soto Order. Indignant Korean monks criticized him saying he had sold out Korean Buddhism to Japan and they rejected the Won Order and established the Imje Order in 1910 in Busan. Thereafter, the situation deteriorated into a confrontation between the Won Order of the capital area and the Imje Order of the outlying regional cities.

In 1911, the Joseon Colonial Government issued seven ordinances and eight enforcement regulations, giving it jurisdiction over the entire monastic community. This naturally made insignificant the confrontation between the Won Order and the Imje Order. The Joseon Colonial Government established a general headquarters to administer Korea's thirty chief temples under the pretext of maintaining both the Seon School and the Doctrinal School. The abbots of these thirty temples decided to establish a federation in one of them in 1915. However, the Gimi Independence Movement in 1919 changed the situation, and the abbot of the headquarters temple who had the backing of the Joseon Colonial Government often ignored any consensual agreements between other monks and abused his authority. In opposition to this, some young monks who had studied in Japan and a few abbots created a new order and established its Central Administrative Office in Gakwang-sa Temple in January 1922. The rest of the abbots created another new order and established another office called the Central Religious Affairs Center in Gakwang-sa Temple in May 1922. The two arrived at a compromise and integrated their orders by establishing the Central Religious Affairs Center for Joseon Buddhism. However, many leaders who served there felt the need to establish clearer principles of the order and to organize a stronger control system. In 1941, these leaders established their general headquarters at Taego-sa Temple and named their order the Jogye Order.

After liberation from Japan in 1945, the Korean Buddhist community held the National Monastic Conference, during which the Japanese ordinances regarding Buddhism were abolished, as well as the temple regulations of Taego-sa. In addition, new religious legislation was established and an integrated order named the Jogye Order of Joseon Buddhism set sail in 1948. Then, between 1954 and 1962 during Korean Buddhism's "Purification Movement," the Jogye Order again found itself in a conflict, this time between bhikkhus (celibate monks) and married monks. In 1962 it made a fresh start by forming an integrated order, the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism. After the purification movement ended, the Jogye Order raised the banners of "restoration of traditional Buddhism" and "globalization of Korean Buddhism.' It also began make serious efforts refarding its three major projects: the translation of sutras, the propagation of Buddhism, and the training of disciples. On the other hand, the married monks established an independent order named the Taego Order of Korean Buddhism in the 1970s. Not long after, many other Buddhist orders were created: the Cheontae Order of Korean Buddhism, the Jingak Order of Korean Buddhism, the Chongji Order of Korean Buddhism, the Gwaneum Order of Korean Buddhism, the Wonhyo Order of Korean Buddhism, and the Naong Order of Korean Buddhism. At present there are about 150 Buddhist orders in Korea.

The Present and Future of Korean Buddhism

The history of Korean Buddhism stretches some 1,700. Since the first introduction of Buddhism into the four kingdoms of Goguryeo, Baekje, Gaya and Silla, it survived the eras of the Unified Silla and Daebarae, and then the eras of the Goryeo Dynasty, the Joseon Dynasty, and the Korean Empire, all the while being shaped and influenced to create a unique kind of Korean Buddhism distinguishable from India, China and Japan. Since the division of the Korean Peninsula, Korean Buddhism is still prominent in Korean cultural identity. The Buddhism of the Unified Silla created magnificent monuments such as Bulguk-sa Temple in Gyeongju and the great Buddha in the Seokguram Grotto. The Buddhism of the Goryeo Dynasty left us exquisite Buddhist paintings and other works of art, as well as the well-preserved woodblocks of the *Tripitaka Koreana*. In its symbiotic relationship with the living cultures of the time, Goryeo Buddhism also left us a superb cultural heritage in Goryeo celadon and Goryeo ginseng.

The Buddhism of the Joseon Dynasty served as a foundation to the invention of the Korean script Hangul and its applications. It also raised monk armies to defend the nation and defeat foreign invaders. In addition, the culture of the Seon School is profoundly reflected in the tea ceremony, tea pots and cups, as well as in white porcelain and the landscape paintings of the late Joseon era. The Buddhism of the Korean Empire played a leading role in the independence movement and fulfilled its duty as a proponent of national culture. In this way, Korean Buddhism has influenced more than 70% of the national culture and established itself as the foundation of Korean culture.

At present, of the 22 million inhabitants of North Korea, a large number are tacitly Buddhists. Of the 48 million inhabitants of South Korea, 53% claim some religion, of which 26.3% are Buddhists (1999, Statistics Bureau), 41.9% male and 58.1% female (1999, Statistics Bureau; The table listed below shows updated statistics, which reflect a more recent 2008 survey). According to the statistical records of the Jogye Order on December 31, 2006, and those released by the Administrative Office of the Jogye Order in July, 2007, Korean Buddhist monks and nuns number 13,294, among which there are 5,120 bhikkhus, 5,033 bhikkhunis, 1,852 novice monks, and 1,289 novice nuns. There are 2,393 temples, of which public temples number 894 while privately owned temples number 1,499. There are 627 traditional temples, 72 temples collect admission fees, and twenty temples are located overseas. There are 2,377 lay Dharma instructors, 1,418 males and 959 females. There are 228 international Dharma instructors, who have been certified to teach Dharma in languages other than Korean. There are 154 military chaplain monks, and sixty-four educational institutions which specialize in lay Buddhist education. Of the cultural assets designated by the state, the cities and the provinces, Buddhist cultural assets number 3,050 articles, which include the 1,772 articles owned by the Jogye Order.

(1) The Present Size of Congregations of Assorted Religions

Classified Religion	Organiz-ations	Temples or Churches	Priests & Monks	Number of Devotees				
				Statistics of Religious Organizations (2008)	Statistics of Religious Organizations (2002)	Statistics of Population & Housing Census (Nov. 2005)	Statistics of Population & Housing Census (Nov. 1995)	Statistics of Population & Housing Census (Nov. 1985)
Buddhism	103	21,935	49,408	39,581,983	37,495,942	10,726,463	10,321,012	8,059,624
Protestantism	124	58,404	94,615	11,944,174	18,727,215	8,616,438	8,760,336	6,489,282
Catholicism	1	1,511	14,597	4,873,447	4,228,488	5,146,147	2,950,730	1,865,397
Confucianism	1	1,049	300	10,185,001	6,004,470	104,575	210,927	483,366
Cheondogyo	1	108	1,500	100,000	996,721	45,835	28,184	26,818
Won Buddhism	1	561	1,886	1,485,938	1,337,227	129,907	86,823	92,302
Daejonggyo	1	22	22		477,342	3,766	7,603	11,030
Other Religions	38	6,710	201,488	14,421,511	12,864,820	197,635	232,209	175,477
Total	270	90,300	363,816	82,592,054	82,132,225	24,970,766	22,597,824	17,203,296

* The numbers listed in the columns labeled "organizations," "temples or churches," "priests and monks," and "number of devotees" reflect the statistics submitted by each religious organization as of December 30, 2008. However, in case of Catholicism, the statistics submitted as of December 31, 2007 are reflected, and those of Protestantism reflect those reported to the general assembly in December 2007.

* The Statistics Bureau recorded the Korean population as of November 1, 1995 as 44,553,710>

* The Statistics Bureau recorded the Korean population as of November 1, 2005 as 47,041,434>

(2) The Number of Orders for Assorted Religions

Classified	Buddhism	Protestantism	Catholicism	Confucianism	Cheond ogyo	Won Buddhism	Daejonggyo	Other Religions	Total
Identified	103	124	1	1	1	1	1	38	270
Unidentified	65	166						9	240
Total	168	290	1	1	1	1	1	47	510

(3) The Number of Juridical Persons for Assorted Religions

Classified	Buddhism		Protestantism		Catholicism		Confucianism		Others		Subtotal		Total
City or Province	FJP	CJP	FJP	CJP	FJP	CJP	FJP	CJP	FJP	CJP	FJP	CJP	
Seoul	31	51	71	105	34	9	2	3	9	9	147	176	324
Busan	10	8	7	2	6	2	1	-	-	-	24	12	36
Daegu	2	2	5	-	3	-	1	-	-	-	11	2	13
Incheon	2	1	3	11	2	-	1	-	-	1	8	13	21
Gwangju	-	2	2	1	3	-	1	-	-	-	6	3	9
Daejeon	3	5	3	3	3	-	1	-	3	-	13	8	21
Ulsan	2	4	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	3	5	8
Gyeonggi	8	14	10	23	10	1	1	1	1	-	30	39	69
Gangwon	2	-	4	1	2	-	1	-	-	-	9	1	10
Chungbuk	3	4	5	3	3	-	1	-	1	-	13	7	20
Chungnam	1	1	2	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	5	3	8
Jeonbuk	1	2	4	15	1	-	1	-	1	1	8	18	26
Jeonnam	-	2	3	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	4	2	6
Gyeongbuk	3	10	6	-	4	-	1	-	-	-	14	10	24
Gyeongnam	-	6	-	-	6	-	1	1	1	2	8	9	17
Jeju	1	3	2	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	5	4	9
Subtotal	69	115	127	167	79	12	17	6	16	13	308	312	621
Total	184		294		91		23		29		621		621

-CJP refers to corporate juridical persons

-FJP refers to foundational juridical persons

※ There may be some errors in the 2008 religious statistics of Korea as it was not produced by a complete enumeration survey, which refers to collecting information directly from the populace. <References> "Major Religious Statistics" (*The Present Religious Situation of Korea*, 2008, published by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism)

Each Buddhist order runs comprehensive training centers called "chongnim." Each chongnim is equipped with four specialized training areas to cultivate sutra study, meditation, vinaya disciplines, and mindfulness of buddhas, which are called gangwon, seonwon, yurwon, and yeomburwon respectively. The Jogye Order has five chongnim in Korea: Yeongchuk, Haein, Jogye, Deoksung, and Gobul. The Taego Order also has a chongnim. Each Buddhist order runs educational institutions called "sangha colleges." The Jogye Order runs seventeen sangha colleges, of which eleven are for bhikkhus and six are for bhikkhunis. The Taego Order's Dongbang Buddhist College, the Cheontae Order's Geumgang Buddhist College, the Jingak Order's Jingak College and the Gwaneum Order's Daewon Buddhist College are educational institutions equivalent to sangha colleges.

Among the more than 300 Buddhist cultural colleges for lay Buddhists, the more prominent ones include: Daewon Buddhist College (Seoul, Busan), Busan Buddhist Educational College (Busan), Anguk Buddhist College (Busan), Daegu Buddhist College (Daegu), Yeongnam Buddhist College (Daegu), Dongsan Buddhist College (Seoul), and Jogyesa Buddhist College (Seoul). There are a few Buddhist cyber-colleges as well.

Accredited Buddhist colleges and universities include: Dongguk University (located in Seoul, Gyeongju, and Ilsan) established by the Jogye Order, Joongang Sangha College (Seoul, Gimpo) established by the Jogye Order, Wideok College (Gyeongju) established by the Jingak Order, Geumgang College (Nonsan) established by the Cheontae Order, Seoul Buddhist Graduate School (Seoul) established by the Bomun Educational Foundation, Dongbang Buddhist Graduate School (Seoul) established by the Taego Order, and Neungin Buddhist Graduate School (Hwaseong). There are also more than thirty elementary, middle, and high schools established by the various Buddhist orders. Among the broadcasting media, there are the Buddhist Broadcasting System (BBS) which includes an IPTV network and seven branch radio stations in Korea, as well as the Buddhist Television Network (BTN). There are more than ten Buddhist newspapers including *Bulgyo Sinmun, Jugan Bulgyo, Beopbo Sinmun, Daehan Bulgyo, Hyeondae Bulgyo, Manbul Sinmun, Hanguk Bulgyo, Geumgang Sinmun, and Jingakjongbo.*

Recently the Jogye Order has expanded opportunities for the stressed general public to experience monastic life. They have opened their temple gates to visitors and now provide Temple Stay programs and temple food programs. These efforts fall under the umbrella objective of the globalization of Korean Buddhism. In addition, the accredited colleges and universities within the Buddhist community have begun translating Korean Buddhist texts into English, among many other related projects. The tradition of Korean Buddhism has attracted the world's attention because it has preserved the original lineage of Buddhism intact. This is an international evaluation of Korean Buddhism which has helped create the foundation of Korean national culture for over 1,700 years. One of the critical tasks Korean Buddhism should undertake is the integration of the Buddhist orders of North and South Korea, which have developed on their own since the Korean Peninsula was divided. In addition, the ever-present social issues as such as ecology, environment, life and death, and public welfare, which have been important to Koreans since the inception of Buddhism, should be re-illuminated with up-to-date language and a new vision in order to develop them into a cultural perspective that can lead humanity towards the future.

Korean Buddhism is faced with a few challenges as well. From outside, it has been bombarded with the aggressive missionary zeal of other religions. From inside, it is challenged again by the secularization of monks and nuns. The former should be overcome with the reinforcement of a Buddhist identity and reconciliation and communication with neighboring religions. The latter should be overcome through a voluntary and steadfast detachment from the secular world by monks and nuns by reminding themselves of the original meaning and wisdom of Buddhism. Other problems have surfaced, such as a reduction in numbers of those who take up monastic life, and the securing of adequate funds. The former can be overcome by appropriately employing the strong points of both traditional and modern education systems. The latter may be overcome by a revival of the culture of generosity and a more systematic method of securing financial resources.

These challenges and tasks faced by Korean Buddhism can be seen as trials, but at the same time, they should serve to temper and strengthen the community. If Korean Buddhism can more efficiently employ the wisdom it has accumulated for more than 1,700 years in new and innovative ways, the future is more than bright. Ultimately, the future of Korean Buddhism depends upon selecting talented people, educating them consistently, supporting them continuously, and assigning them in appropriate places.

2. Korean Buddhist Philosophy

Sungtaek Cho

Introduction

Buddhism was transmitted to the Korean peninsula from China in the middle of the fourth century CE. Korea at this time was divided into three kingdoms: Kokuryo, Paekche and Silla. Both Kokuryô and Paekche accepted Buddhism as a state religion immediately after it was introduced, to Kokuryo in 372 CE and to Paekche in 384 CE. However, it was not until two centuries later that Silla accepted Buddhism as a state religion. This was because Silla was the last of the three kingdoms to become established as a centralized power under the authority of one king.

It is not coincidental that Buddhism was accepted by these three states at the same time that a strong kingship, independent of the aristocracy, was created. These newly-established kingships needed a fresh ideology with which to rule, separate from the age-old shamanistic tradition which had been honored among the previous loose confederations of tribes. Buddhism fulfilled this need. It became a highly valued tool which kings used shrewdly, not only to provide their societies with a political ideology but to give them a foundation from which to build a viable system of ethics and philosophical thinking. Given this historical legacy, Korean Buddhism came to possess a feature which set it apart from the other East Asian traditions: it became "state-protection" Buddhism. Although this was not a particularly sophisticated phenomenon on a philosophical level, this feature had a lasting influence on all aspects of Buddhist thought in Korea. In general, Korean Buddhism has followed a course of development more or less parallel to that of the greater East Asian context, although with notably closer ties with China than Japan. There is no historical evidence which indicates any direct intellectual transmission from India, Buddhism's birthplace; rather, most of the philosophical development of Buddhism in Korea occurred as Korean monks travelled to China to study and obtain Buddhist texts which had either been written in, or translated into, Chinese. Despite such close ties to China, however, Korean Buddhism has developed its own identity, distinct from that of its progenitor.

Compared to Indian and Central Asian Buddhism, which developed along clear historical lines, the development of Buddhism in China was largely dependent on the personalities of individual monks, and was thus affected by such factors as their region of origination and the particular texts which they emphasized. Thus, in the process of assimilating Indian Buddhism, the Chinese created and developed a number of widely varying schools of Buddhist thought. In Korea, however, such a diverse number of philosophical traditions was never established. Rather, one of the distinct features of Korean Buddhism has been its preference for incorporating many different perspectives into a single, cohesive body of thought.

Three Kingdoms Period (372–668 CE)

When Buddhism arrived on the Korean peninsula, Korea was in a period of transition, changing from loose tribal societies to states ruled by centralized kingships. Buddhism was strongly patronized by the kings, as it provided them with a valuable political ideology, but nevertheless it had to face the challenge of countering the indigenous belief system based firmly on shamanistic ritualism. In response to this challenge, certain Buddhist doctrines which tended to undermine animistic beliefs received special emphasis in Korea. An example of these is the doctrine of karma, which asserts the importance of ethical action by humans and denies the power of gods and spirits in shaping human destiny. However, Buddhism also resorted to the tactic of assimilation. The heavenly being Hanunim, a shamanistic deity, was absorbed into the Buddhist conception of heaven. Similarly, the indigenous shamanistic worship of mountains, earth deities and dragons all became integrated into the Buddhist religious system.

Only fragmentary bits of information are available concerning Buddhist philosophy during its early existence in Korea. As previously discussed, the development of Buddhist studies in Korea ran almost parallel to that of China. Both Mahayana schools, such as Tientai, Huayan and Dilun, as well as Hinayana schools, including Abhidharma and the Sarvastivada and Vinaya traditions, were introduced. However, it seems that Madhyamika philosophy formed the mainstream of Buddhist doctrinal thought during this period. Names of Korean monks from the Kokuryo and Paekche kingdoms are often mentioned, particularly in Japanese records, as masters of Madhyamika theory or as founders of the Sanron (in Chinese, *Sanlun*) school in Japan (the Sanlun school was based on the sinicized interpretation of the Indian Madhyamika).

We can learn much about the Korean interpretation of Madhyamika theory by investigating the contributions of Sungnang, an eminent Korean monk. Although we have no exact record of his date of birth, according to the Biography of Fadu in the *Liang Gaosengzhuan* ("The Liang Biographies of the Eminent Monks"), Sungnang succeeded to the lineage after the Master Fadu passed away in 500 AD. Sungnang's unique interpretations represented a turning point not only for Sanlun studies but for Chinese Buddhist studies as a whole. Through the decisive contributions of Sungnang, Sanlun was established by Jizang (549–623 AD) as one of the major schools in Chinese Buddhist history. Sungnang's own works have not been transmitted, but his philosophical ideas are cited throughout Jizang's writings.

During Sungnang's time, Chinese Buddhist studies were divided into Northern/Abhidharma and Southern/Satyasiddhi. Sanlun was considered part of the Satyasiddhi school, whose doctrine was based on Abhidharma theory and centered around the Hinayana concept of the Four Noble Truths. Sungnang, however, made a distinction between Satyasiddhi and Sanlun, and he demarcated a boundary between the Old and New Sanlun. He is best-known for his two-truth theory, in which he distinguished between conventional and ultimate truth. In his view, these are not ontological truths, but represent rather a convenient pedagogical device for teachers. In discussions concerning truth, some say that it is existence, some that it is non-existence, others that it is either existence or nonexistence, while still others say that it is neither existence nor non-existence. Sungnang claimed, however, that none of these statements represent the complete truth, but merely indicate one aspect of it. Thus, in his view, the two truths represent different expressions of the excellent teaching of the Middle Path.

For Sungnang, the Middle Path was not a state situated between existence and nonexistence, or duality and non-duality. Rather, he saw it as consisting of three levels: on the first level, the existence of all beings is considered as conventional truth, and the emptiness of all things is regarded as ultimate truth. Here, emptiness is called ultimate truth in response to the followers of Abhidharma who advocated the existence of dharmas. On the second level, the existence and emptiness of the first level are both viewed as conventional truth while the denial of both is seen as ultimate truth. This is Sungnang's rebuttal to the Satyasiddhi school, which admits the dualism of existence and emptiness, positing emptiness as ultimate truth. Finally, on the third and last level, it is recognized that both truths as well as all three levels, are merely teaching devices. Thus, the three gates or three levels are expounded only in order to realize the truth of not three. This non-acquisition of, and non-abiding in, one level or one truth is initially named the ultimate.

The structure of Sungnang's theory indicates a process of continuing dialectics to a level of infinity. As such, it negates any fixed concepts which regard the ultimate as a state arrived at through progression. For Sungnang and his followers, a highest level does not exist; rather, this dialectic method of denial continues endlessly. The ultimate truth, then, cannot be the ultimate; it is not an absolute reality. This is why Sungnang asserted that the two-truth theory was not a principle but only a pedagogical tool. He showed clearly that it is not possible to verbalize or conceptualize about ultimate truth. Any attempt to do so will only bring one back to the level of conventional truth. This unique philosophy marked the beginning of the New Sanlun school and was elaborated on first by Zhouyong and then by Jizang, who finalized its ideas in the latter half of the sixth century.

Unified Silla Period (668–935 AD)

This period was one of religious maturity and innovation; as such, it represented the culmination of Buddhist influence in Korea, both culturally and doctrinally. Buddhism fully blossomed and flourished at this time, reaching heights that it would never see again. On the one hand, influences from China were still felt, as new schools of thought were introduced by Silla monks returning from the Tang dynasty. On the other hand, Korean Buddhist scholarship by such eminent monks as Wonhyo (617–86) played an important role in the development of Chinese Buddhist thought as well. However, unlike the Tang tendency towards sectarianism, Unified Silla leaned towards a synthesis of various aspects of Buddhist thought into a type of interdenominational philosophy, the so-called *t'ong pulgyo*, or Buddhism of total interpenetration. The syncretic approach of Korean Buddhist philosophy can be best understood under the following headings: the reconciliation of doctrinal disputes, the Silla Hwaom School, the Silla Vijnanavada School, and the introduction of Son (Chan) Buddhism from China.

Unified Silla Period: Reconciliation of Doctrinal Disputes

One of the most important proponents of this syncretic approach was the noted monk and scholar Wonhyo. In his view, the various disputes which arose among Buddhist scholars were similar to the story of the blind men's description of an elephant: each man was only defining one aspect of the animal. In one sense, they were all wrong, because each failed to fully describe the elephant. In another sense, however, they were not entirely wrong, as what they were describing was not something other than the elephant.

Wonhyo was not interested in merely partial or incomplete understandings, however. Rather, he focused on integrating a variety of doctrines into one complete view, as seen from a higher perspective. This view has been termed *hwajaeng*, or the "reconciliation of doctrinal controversy". The hermeneutical device used in this doctrinal reconciliation is well represented in his unique genre of Buddhist commentarial work, *chong-yo*, as well as in his concepts of *kae* (unfolding or opening) and *hap* (folding or sealing) the truth. Wonhyo is believed to have composed approximately seventeen of these *chong-yo*, of which only five are extant. *Chong* translates as doctrine or theme, and *yo* means essence. Thus, for example, one of his works, the *Yolban'gyong chongyo*, translates as the "Doctrinal Essentials of the Nirvana Sutra." Here, "doctrine" refers to the various ideas which are discussed, and "essentials" integrates them into one primary framework of thought. Similarly, by his usage of the word "unfolding" (*kae*), Wonhyo indicates a variety of ideas and analyses, while through "folding" (*hap*) he denotes how these themes may be synthesized into one cohesive unit of understanding. Doctrine, then, reflects the unfolding of the one into the many, whereas essence refers to the folding of the many back into the one.

Another device which Wonhyo used in order to reconcile opposites and thus denote their non-duality was his theory of essence-function (Korean: *ch'e-yong*). In his *Taesung kisillon* ("Treatise on Awakening Mahayana Faith") he asserts that Mahayana is a synonym for One-Mind. This One-Mind represents essence, or *ch'e*, while the variety of mental and physical states, or the arising of dharmas, represents function, or *yong*. In terms of its internal logic, essence-function is no different from the *kae-hap* (folding and unfolding) formulation. According to Wonhyo, when the essence of Mahayana, or One-Mind, is unfolded, immeasurable and limitless meaning can be found in its doctrine. Conversely, when the doctrine is folded, it returns to its essence, which consists of two aspects: the absolute and the phenomenal. The limitless meanings of One-Mind are identical to this essence and are completely amalgamated within it. Therefore, One-Mind unfolds and folds freely, and establishes and refutes without restrictions.

In this way, the myriads of sensory impressions are brought to a permanent end and return to the source of One-Mind. Thus, there is nothing that is not advocated and nothing that is not refuted. Wonhyo calls the advocacy concession or acceptance (*hwanho*), and he labels the refutation variously as deprivation (*t'al*), negation (*kyon*), return (*wang*) or prohibition (*purho*).

Wonhyo was particularly concerned with using his hermeneutic tools to reconcile the Madhyamika and Yogacara doctrines. In his view, Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamakasastra* and *Dvadasanikāyasastra* offer a thorough dialectic critique of all views which a person might advocate, to the extent that they abolish both the views refuted and the act of refutation (see Nagarjuna). However, because Madhyamika dialectics do not affirmatively acknowledge both the subject and object of this refutation, the approach is purely negative, and thus nothing is established. On the other hand, the Yogacara school accomplishes a thorough analysis of all mental states and accordingly establishes both the shallow and profound teachings. However, because the Yogacarins do not continue to refute what they have established, theirs is a purely positive approach, and thus, nothing is refuted. Doctrinal controversy arose between the two schools due to the fact that the Madhyamikas attached to refutation and deprivation, whereas the Yogacarins attached to establishment and acceptance. Each recognized only a part of the truth; although neither was entirely wrong, at the same time neither was altogether correct.

Wonhyo was able, based on his unique usage of unfolding and folding, to reconcile these differences by including them into a single Buddhist teaching, that of One-Mind, which allows for both affirmation and negation. According to Wonhyo, the Taesung kisillon, a noted Mahayana text upon which he based his well-known commentary, is a syncretic work which embraces the positions of both Madhyamika and Yogacara. He asserts that while it refutes all relative views (as represented by the two above-mentioned schools), it also embraces them comprehensively within the all-encompassing One-Mind.

Unified Silla Period: Silla Hwaom School

Another vital contribution to Korean Buddhist thought was made by Uisang (625–702), who was a contemporary of Wonhyo and is known as the founder of the Korean Hwaom school (Huayan in Chinese) based on the Avatamsaka Sutra. Unlike Wonhyo, who had never been to China, Uisang spent almost ten years there and studied under Zhiyan (602–68), the second patriarch of the Chinese Huayan school. The *Hwaom ilsung popke* ("Diagram of the Dharmadhatu of the One Vehicle of Hwaom") is Uisang's only major extant work, and is comprised of his *Haein sammae* to ("Diagram of Ocean Seal Samadhi") and an auto-commentary.

The *Ocean Seal*, as it is commonly known, written while Uisang was in China, is a poem consisting of 210 characters. It opens with the word *pop* (dharma) and closes with *pul* (Buddha), thus signifying the cause-and-effect relationship between the two. By placing both of these characters in the centre of a diagram in the form of a maze, Uisang articulated the basic theme of Hwaom philosophy, which asserts that beginning and end, or cause and effect, occupy the same position while still retaining their own distinctive characteristics. In this way, he depicted Hwaom philosophy as a mystery of simultaneous mutual penetration. In addition, he pointed to the Hwaom soteriological position that within the fifty-two stages of a bodhisattva's career, the first stage of initial faith itself embodies all fifty-two stages, including the final stage of marvellous enlightenment. Of this position, a well-known Hwaom aphorism states, "The moment one arouses an enlightenment thought (*bodhicitta*), instantly perfect enlightenment is attained."

Although Uisang's expression of Hwaom theory in the *Ocean Seal* was not his own creation, it succeeded in ably representing the main ideas of the school, both symbolically and graphically. The *Ocean Seal* is traditionally presented to monks upon completion of their course of study, a mark of how highly esteemed it is in the Korean Buddhist tradition. It is also chanted in Korean Buddhist ceremonies as a *dharani* having been endowed with a special mantric power. Along with Wonhyo's philosophy of the reconciliation of opposites, Uisang's contributions to Hwaom theory helped to create the Korean tradition of *t'ong pulgyo* and provided the foundation for the synthesis of the doctrinal or scriptural schools (Kyo) and the meditational schools (Son) by Chinul in the following Koryo dynasty.

Unified Silla Period: Silla Vijnanavada School

There were actually three different systems of Yogacara (or Mind-Only) philosophy which were transmitted to Korea from China during the Unified Silla period. The first can actually be traced back to the Three Kingdoms period, when Won'gwang (d. 630) returned to Korea after studying the *Mahayanasanugraha* (in Chinese, *Shelun*) in China. However, it was not until the appearance of Wonch'uk (612–96) that any significant study of Yogacara was undertaken in Korea. Wonch'uk is considered the major figure among Silla monks studying Yogacara doctrine. His system is classified as the Old Yogacara, founded by the Indian monk Paramartha (499–569). This is in order to distinguish it from the New Yogacara, which was founded by the Chinese monk Xuanzang (602–64). Xuanzang translated Dharmapala's *Vijnaptimatratasiddhi* into Chinese and his new school, which was established on the basis of this text, became known as the Faxiang (Dharma Characteristics) school.

The two Yogacara schools, Old and New, differed in their theoretical approaches and there were conflicts between them. Wonch'uk and his disciples eventually established their own school, called the Ximing school. This was followed by the Silla Vijnanavada school, which included such noted monks as Tojung and T'aehyon. Vijnanavada theory in Silla developed its own unique characteristics quite distinct from those of Xuanzang's school in China. The Silla school not only effected a synthesis of the various Vijnanavada schools in China, but also adopted theories from other Chinese schools, such as Tientai and Huayan. It achieved this synthesis through its understanding of the term "One Vehicle", an approach made possible by the work of Wonhyo. Like Wonhyo, the Silla Vijnanavada school attempted to reconcile the teaching of Madhyamika with that of Yogacara, but by using the concept of one sound as its reference point. Here, Wonch'uk was referring to the Buddha's teaching, which has one meaning but is given different explanations depending on one's level of understanding. Wonch'uk's concept of "one sound" is, of course, comparable to the concept of the One Vehicle, as both are nothing but teaching devices used to comprehend various understandings from a higher vantage point.

Unified Silla Period: Introduction of Son

A new epoch occurred in Korean Buddhism upon the transmission of Son (Chan) Buddhism from China. This new movement, with its strong emphasis on meditational practice, entered Korea not long after it was introduced into China. According to traditional accounts, it was Pomnang (*fl.* 632–46) who first introduced Chan Buddhism to Korea, following his study under Daoxin (580–651), the fourth patriarch of the Chinese Chan school. His lineage was passed down through Sinhaeng, Chunbom and Hyeun until it reached Chison Tohon (824–82), who founded the Mount Huiyang school, the oldest Son lineage in Korea, in 879. Within a hundred-year period, from the eighth to the ninth centuries, eight other mountain schools were founded. From this time onwards, the term Nine Mountains has come to represent Korean Son schools in general, and this number remained unchanged during the early Koryo period.

In contrast to the Chinese Chan schools, which were categorized as the Five Schools and Seven Orders and which maintained sharp sectarian distinctions, the Korean Nine Mountain schools were classified according to the identities of their founders. Only a monk who had originally studied in China was entitled to be the founder of a new school. Furthermore, in the Korean tradition, the relation between teacher and disciple was considered more important than the philosophical doctrine espoused. This differed sharply from the Chinese Chan tradition, in which lineage affiliation was based directly on doctrine. The Korean approach was to regard what they called the Five Schools and Seven Orders not as different schools, but rather as different families of the same school. For this reason, the Nine Mountain schools, regardless of their founders, were all considered to belong to the Chogye order. The name Chogye (in Chinese, Zaoxi) was taken from the mountain associated with Huineng, who was regarded as the progenitor of Chan before its division into five schools and seven orders.

Eight of Korea's nine mountain schools (the exception was the Mount Sumi school) were derived from or related to the Chinese Hongzhou school. As noted by Zongmi (780–841), the renowned Chinese Buddhist commentator and philosopher, the Hongzhou school had a close doctrinal affiliation with Huayan. Most of the Korean monks who came to China to study Buddhism were already familiar with Hwaom philosophy, as it was the predominant school in Korea at that time. Therefore it is not surprising that they were attracted to the Hongzhou school. However, the fundamental difference between Huayan and Chan must not be overlooked: while the former emphasizes scriptural study, the latter rejects it, choosing rather to espouse "a separate transmission outside the scriptures". This crucial difference may also have attracted the Silla monks, who were perhaps frustrated with the philosophically elaborate and priest-centred Hwaom school.

Immediately upon Son's introduction to Unified Silla, an antagonistic tension was created between the new Son and the old doctrinal schools, particularly Hwaom. Son masters perceived the scripture-based Hwaom school as antithetical to their practice-oriented mission. Later, however, they altered their approach in an effort to synthesize the messages of the two schools.

Koryo period (918–1392): Parallel Cultivation of Doctrinal Study and Contemplation

Upon the collapse of the Silla dynasty, the Korean peninsula reverted back to three kingdoms until King T'aejo unified the country and subsequently founded the Koryo dynasty. Under the Koryo, Buddhism was fully supported not only by the royal family but by the entire apparatus of the Korean government. The price, however, was tight government control.

Despite these controls, discord between the radical Son schools and the more conservative doctrinal proponents continued, and it was not till Uich'on (1055–1101) that a serious attempt was made to reconcile these conflicts. Although his background was in Hwaom, Uich'on studied various schools of Buddhist thought throughout his career. Most notably, he travelled to China in 1085 and studied with renowned teachers of the Huayan, Tientai, Pure Land, Vinaya and Chan sects there. Upon returning to Korea, he attempted to incorporate Son into the system of Tientai (in Korean, *Ch'ont'ae*). He felt that meditation was essential not only for followers of Son but for members of all Buddhist schools, and he criticized the polarization of the two approaches, doctrinal and meditational. From his perspective - which favoured scriptural study yet also emphasized meditational practice - although *dharma* is devoid of words and appearances, it is not separate from them. Similarly, doctrinal study and meditation do not oppose each other but should be seen as complements; each is a requisite tool for the attainment of awakening.

Yet Uich'on was unable to accept the radical doctrine of the Son of his time. He acknowledged the validity of Son only on the condition that it remained based on scriptural teachings. For him, the Son dictum of "transmission outside the scriptures" was not acceptable as a valid Buddhist teaching. He believed that the practitioners of his time, by abandoning the scriptures, were veering dangerously towards heresy. He felt that his own *kyogwan kyomsu*, or "parallel cultivation of doctrinal study and contemplation", was the correct approach. Viewing the system of Ch'ont'ae as one which harmonized Son and scriptural study, Uich'on attempted to consolidate the Son school into the Ch'ont'ae order. However, he was unable to accomplish this, thanks not only to his early death, but also to of his narrow understanding of Son.

It was Chinul (1158–1210) who effectively assimilated Son into the mainstream Korean Buddhist tradition, if not in its entirety, at least in the area of doctrine. Chinul lived during one of the most difficult times in the history of Koryo Buddhism. Having become dependent on the support of the government, Koryo Buddhism had lost most, if not all, of its earlier spiritual vitality; corruption was at its peak and discipline in the monasteries was increasingly lax. Chinul perceived the Buddhism of his day as subject to "ten kinds of disease", and his endeavours to effect a rapprochement between the Son and doctrinal schools were founded on his deep concern about this decline.

If Wonhyo's philosophy of harmonization was aimed at ending the doctrinal disputes among the various schools, Chinul's intent was to provide a theoretical scheme for harmonizing Son with the scriptural schools, and to offer a radical approach to the issue of final enlightenment based on the doctrinal teachings of Mahayana. He attempted ultimately to provide a systematic, theoretical framework which would incorporate both theory and experience. Being a Son monk, he was deeply aware that only through one's own experience can one attain final, ultimate liberation. The primary value of his theory, then, was that it clearly displayed an understanding of the necessity of practice.

Unlike Uich'on, whose viewpoint was rooted in the doctrinal teachings, Chinul's foundation was in Son. His syncretic vision was therefore to establish a new Son school which would incorporate not only various teachings of the traditional Chan schools in China, but various doctrinal teachings as well. His primary intent was to systematize a comprehensive soteriological scheme for Son which would be pertinent to practitioners of various levels of capacity. He was inspired in this task by the great Chinese Buddhist thinker Zongmi, a patriarch of both the Huayan and the Heze school of Chan. Chinul, deeply frustrated with the deterioration of Son in his time, was especially attracted by the balanced approach of the Heze school, which encompassed both the intellectual understanding of the scriptural teachings and the radical, anti-intellectual spirit of Chan. Chinul's soteriological scheme of sudden enlightenment followed by gradual self-cultivation reflects the Heze approach.

In an inscription written by Kunsu Kim (*fl.* 1216–20), it is said that Chinul established three main approaches to Son practice, directly reflecting his own enlightenment experiences: the balanced practice of meditation and wisdom, inspired by the *Platform Sutra*; faith and understanding according to the complete and sudden teachings, inspired by the Li Tongxuan's *Exposition of the Huayanjing* (*Avatamsaka Sutra*); and finally, the shortcut approach of *hwadu* (in Chinese, *huatou*) investigation. We can elucidate Chinul's philosophical system by examining these three approaches.

Koryo Period: Balanced Cultivation of Meditation and Wisdom

In his *Susim kyol* ("Secrets on Cultivating the Mind"), Chinul elucidates a method for cultivating the mind after a sudden, initial enlightenment experience. According to him, sudden enlightenment represents a realization of the nature of true mind as having two aspects: voidness and calmness in its essence, and numinous awareness in its function. These in turn correspond to the two aspects of dharma, immutability and adaptability. Mind is in its essence originally void and calm, and yet at the same time it adapts freely in infinite ways, depending on one's level of consciousness. Thus if one's consciousness is deluded, Mind appears ignorant, while if it is awakened, Mind manifests a numinous awareness.

In Chinul's system, gradual practice should follow after the sudden, initial awakening to the nature of True Mind. Chinul correlates the essence and function of Mind with meditation (*samadhi*) and wisdom (*prajna*), respectively: in the task of cultivation, meditation is the essence and wisdom is the function of Mind; they are inseparable, non-dual aspects of the same thing. This dynamic concept of the interrelationship of meditation and wisdom further entails that in cultivating Mind one should be alert in the void and calm mental state, and calm in the state of numinous awareness: calm and alertness represent meditation and wisdom, which are inseparable and non-dual, and thus must be practiced simultaneously in cultivation.

Even if one attains a sudden awakening to the nature of Mind and thus realizes the identity of meditation and wisdom, the balanced cultivation of meditation and wisdom is still important: due to the residue of defilements and the karmic force deriving from long-standing habits, one's mind-nature does not always have its original harmony. The two non-dual, inseparable aspects of mind, essence and function, can become bifurcated, as if they were two different, separate entities. An excess of essence can produce too much calmness, which in turn leads to dullness, while an excess of function can produce over-alertness, thereby easily causing distraction.

Since Chinul follows the sudden approach to enlightenment, in which enlightenment precedes cultivation, his interpretation of meditation and samadhi as essence and function differs from that of the gradual school of Son. In the latter, where practices are centred on the gradual removal of defilements in order to achieve perfect Buddhahood, meditation is used to counter the defilements in the conditioned realm, and wisdom is used thereafter to counter discriminative thinking. These two different methods are intended to ultimately achieve a penetrating insight into the nature of reality. However, although Chinul does not exclude the possibility that the gradual approach to meditation and wisdom may be used as an expedient means for counteracting defilements, he felt it should be allowed only after the experience of sudden awakening. In fact, Chinul urges that at all levels of practice, as well as at all stages of a practitioner's development, both meditation and wisdom should be combined, just as the principle of balance, that is, of calmness and alertness, must be maintained in order to access the enlightenment experience.

Koryo Period: Faith and Understanding According to the Complete and Sudden Teaching

More often than not, the doctrinal teachings based on scriptures were considered by Son masters as a grave fallacy, an impediment to attaining final enlightenment. From their perspective, this is especially true because the conceptual or discriminatory nature of doctrinal teachings cannot invoke the Absolute, which is ineffable. On the other hand, Hwaom, as one of the doctrinal schools, considered Son as merely representing the sudden teaching, which they considered a lesser teaching than the final, complete doctrine of Hwaom. These two main branches of Mahayana Buddhism thus seemed to contradict each other, not only in terms of doctrinal framework, but also in their soteriological schemes.

Chinul believed that Son and Hwaom were not necessarily contradictory, but could serve to complement each other. He felt that the conceptual framework of Hwaom could help to enhance practitioners' understanding, especially those with a lesser capacity, of the mind-to-mind transmission of the esoteric teachings of Son. He was especially concerned about the Son practitioners of his time, whom he felt had strayed from correct practice due to their lack of a proper understanding of scriptural teachings. He feared that they were meditating in a state of ignorance and thus in vain. Chinul felt that proper guidance in the scriptural teachings was necessary for them to achieve final enlightenment

However, it was not an easy task to synthesize the two, thanks to their different orientations. Hwaom philosophy systemized the path to enlightenment into fifty-two stages, beginning with the ten levels of faith and ending with the stage of Buddhahood. Often a temporal scheme was assumed, such as a period of three incalculable aeons, or more than several lives, from the initial stage of faith to the final attainment of Buddhahood. Within this progressive scheme, Hwaom soteriology postulated a process of learning, practice and realization, in which each stage proceeds sequentially in a causal relationship. Chinul thus incorporated the soteriology of Hwaom, which assumes a progressive development within a temporal scheme, into the sudden teaching approach of Son. It was in Li Tongxuan's *Exposition of the Avatamsaka Sutra* that he found a means of incorporating the two systems into a viable soteriological scheme.

Inspired by Li Tongxuan's unique interpretation of the Huayan soteriological structure, and recapitulating the latter's essential message, Chinul was able to propose, as another possible approach to Son practice, the method of faith and understanding as detailed in his *Wondon Songbullon* ("Complete and Sudden Attainment of Buddhahood"). Chinul noted that unmoving wisdom, or the wisdom of universal brightness, is essentially identical with the deluded mind. Through a sudden awakening to this essential identity, one can enter directly the initial abiding stage, the stage of the arising of *bodhicitta*, in which one may directly experience the fact that one is a Buddha. From this stage onward, the subsequent stages of the *bodhisattva* path can be instantly achieved because of the functioning of inherent Buddhahood. Such a soteriological structure is possible due to the fact that unmoving wisdom is not merely a fruit to be attained at the final stage, but also a cause for the final attainment of Buddhahood. Moreover, from the initial stage of faith to the final attainment of Buddhahood, it is the unmoving wisdom of Buddha which operates unceasingly.

Koryo Period: Shortcut Approach of Hwadu Investigation

Although Chinul incorporated the theoretical framework of Hwaom into Son practice, he did not forget to indicate that theories and conceptual frameworks need to be abandoned at a certain stage. In their place, Chinul proposed his method of *hwadu* investigation, which is like a finger pointing to the moon.

Chinul never lost sight of the fact that the goal of Son practice is to transcend conceptual understanding, thus leaving behind all discriminatory thoughts. As a means of achieving this goal Chinul found the investigation of *hwadu* most effective, a method, which in his words, cuts through iron and splits nails.

Hwadu is often considered a synonym for *kongan* (in Chinese, *gongan*). More precisely, however, the *hwadu* is the essential point of the *kongan*, which is used as a topic of meditation in the Son school. The purpose of *hwadu* investigation is to help practitioners break through views based on their conceptual understanding of the dharma and to ultimately return them to the source of all discriminative thought. Thus, Chinul referred to the function of the *hwadu* as one of cleansing knowledge and understanding.

The *hwadu* method is also called the shortcut approach, as it involves no conceptual descriptions but rather points one directly to the truth right from the inception of practice. In his *Kanhwa Kyorui Ron* ("Resolving Doubts About Observing the *Hwadu*"), Chinul discusses the three mystery gates, or three different methods, differentiated according to one's capacity for attaining the ultimate teaching of the Son school: (1) the mystery of essence, which involves the conceptual understanding of the

Buddha-dharma, such as the doctrine of the unimpeded interpenetration of all phenomena of the Hwaom school; (2) the mystery of the word, which helps one eliminate the defects of conceptual understanding and ultimately destroy it; and (3) the mystery of mystery, in which practitioners abandon the interpretive analytical approach altogether and investigate the word itself. This method transcends any trace of a sign which a word may signify and finally results in the awareness of the noumenal state, that is, the void and calm state of mind.

In making *hwadu* the cardinal approach of Son practice, Chinul was influenced by Dahui Zonggao (1089–1163), a disciple of Yuanwu Gejin of the Linji school in China. Inspired by the *Dahui yulu* ("The Records of Dahui"), Chinul was the first Korean Son master to introduce the *hwadu* into Korean Son practice. *Hwadu* became a hallmark of Korean Son and, combined with the concurrent cultivation of meditation and wisdom, and the doctrine of sudden awakening and gradual practice, represents the essence of Korean Son.

In summary, Chinul systematized a Korean approach to Son practice which stood apart from all other schemes. Its uniqueness lay in the fact that it synthesized the doctrinal teachings into Son practice, provided a theoretical framework for Son practice, and maintained the fundamental spirit of Son teaching by postulating *hwadu* investigation as a shortcut to the final attainment of enlightenment. With only slight variations through the ages, this structure has been maintained by Korean Son practitioners ever since.

After Chinul's time, Koryo Buddhism began to gradually decline. This was primarily due to the political instability of the Koryo court after the Mongol invasion, but it was caused in part by the corruption of the Buddhist monasteries and monks. However, there were still contributions made by such monks as Kyônghan Paegun (1290–1374), T'aego Pou (1301–82) and Naong Hyegûn (1320–76), who tried to restore the strength of Buddhism in the latter Koryo. All three had returned from Yuan China after studying under the Linji (in Korean, *Imje*) school, which places a strong emphasis on *hwadu* practice. The most radical and confrontational methods of the Linji school became very popular in Korea and had a great impact on Korean Son practice. However, due to the general social instability of the times, there was insufficient support for a sustained reinvigoration of Buddhism.

In this period of decline the Korean literati, whose official education was grounded in neo-Confucian philosophy, succeeded in supplanting Buddhism as a state-sponsored ideology. Chinese philosophies, such as Daoism and neo-Confucianism, became increasingly influential, and monks like Kyonghan and Naong began to study these schools of thought. This represents the beginning of another unique trend in Korean Buddhism, as monks began to emphasize the study of non-Buddhist philosophies. Korea became more and more Confucianized, first in a political sense and later throughout society as a whole. This move toward Confucianism began gradually in the latter period of Koryo and accelerated with the beginning of the Choson dynasty, which was founded in 1392.

Choson Period (1392–1910)

The Choson dynasty was founded on the basis of neo-Confucianism, which combined a strong political ideology with a practical ethics emphasizing the importance of the family. Neo-Confucianism was strongly antagonistic towards Buddhism, as Buddhist monks left their families and maintained strict celibacy. During the Choson dynasty Buddhism was not only suppressed by those in political power but also largely ignored by intellectuals. In terms of social stratification, monks were ranked in the same class as the servants and were not allowed to enter the capital city. Amidst such harsh circumstances, Buddhism became completely marginalized.

The Buddhists of this period used their adverse circumstances as an opportunity to systematize a harmonized perspective which reconciled the philosophical conflicts among neo-Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism (the three systems were often called *samgyo* or the Three Religions.) This synthesis in turn served once again to set Korean Buddhism apart as a unique system of thought.

Kihwa (1376–1433), otherwise known as Hamho Tukt'ong, continued the syncretic view of Korean Son systematized by Chinul, and was also the first Buddhist monk to advocate Buddhism against the neo-Confucian attack. He was also the first Buddhist monk to assert the intrinsic unity of the three religions, Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism. Kihwa's life and times are reflected in his philosophical system. He was a prolific writer of Buddhist exegeses, in which he freely used Confucian concepts as well as citations from Confucian texts in order to clarify Buddhist ideas: he saw Buddhism and Confucianism as supplementary and not contradictory systems. He objected not only to the exclusivist attitude of Son practitioners toward the doctrinal schools, but also of Confucianism toward Buddhism. Before he studied Buddhism he was educated, like most sons from upper-class families, in the Confucian classics. He often used poetry, both from his own pen and from the classics, as a means of elucidating Buddhist texts.

His syncretic approach is well demonstrated in his *Hyonjong non* ("Treatise on Manifesting Righteousness"). In this apologetic essay on the unity of Buddhism and Confucianism, he not only defends Buddhism using the language of Confucians, but he goes one step further and advocates Buddhism using scriptural evidence from the Confucian classics. In this treatise, Kihwa identifies the various mental functions, which he termed usually as the arising of dharma, with emotions, often described as the obstruction of the true nature of mind in neo-Confucianism. In so doing, he is pointing out the similarities between Buddhism and Confucianism in the sense that both attempt to eliminate the arising of dharma or obstructions of the mind so that the true nature will be manifested. Buddhists call this the "enlightened state", while Confucians call it "being a saint". Kihwa stressed that in terms of the final goal there is no discrepancy between them, and in fact there exists an intrinsic unity between the two. Further, as the title *Treatise on Manifesting Righteousness* implies, Kihwa saw that both ultimately reveal the truth. He also demonstrated that Buddhist cultivation does not differ from the Confucian principle of cultivating the mind, step by step, beginning with cultivation of the personal life, continuing with regulation of the family and national order, and finally ending with world peace. Moreover, he claimed that the Buddhist teaching allowed people to pursue different levels of practice according to their capacity, from the *bodhisattva* path to the merit-making of ordinary people. With this, Kihwa intended to demonstrate the superiority of the Buddhist teaching, which in his view embraces a universality that includes all kinds of people, in contrast to the soteriology of Confucianism, which is often limited to the highly educated.

Regarding the social aspect of the two systems, Confucianism was often considered to be superior to Buddhism. Kihwa believed otherwise. He felt that the Confucian system, by using tactics of reward and punishment in governing the people, enforced a mere superficial obedience. In contrast, as Buddhism based its teachings on the law of cause and effect, and as it further propagated the value of silence through meditation, it promoted a more spontaneous response.

Kihwa also developed the issue of social ethics, including filial piety, the most important aspect of Confucian ethics, into the greater context of truth itself, which he termed *to* (in Chinese, *dao*), or the Way. He defined the Buddhist perspective of the truth, the Way, as consisting of two aspects, the unchangeable principle and temporary expediency. According to him, only by both maintaining principle and adapting to change through the use of expedients can one achieve completion of the Way. However, the formalistic and family-centred ethics of Confucianism cannot achieve both of these goals. Similarly, he felt that one who is still subject to passions is not able to be loyal to the state and, at same time, to be filial at home. Only when one becomes free from one's own passions and conceptual boundaries can one extend oneself to universal altruism, as represented in the Confucian concept of humanity, (in Chinese, *ren*), or the great compassion of Buddhism. Residing in the mountains away from home is neither unfilial nor disloyal, but is a greater form of filial piety and loyalty to the state, unimpeded by any particular phenomena. The Buddhist aim of achieving an unimpeded state between principle and phenomena, as well as among phenomena, was focused not on leaving society or the world, but rather on realizing the perfection of society.

Unlike the fourth and fifth century Chinese apologetic defenses of Buddhism, Kihwa defended Buddhism more positively and often advocated its superiority. However, before he became a Buddhist he was well-known as a promising young Confucian scholar. One of his biographical accounts tells us that his interest in Buddhism was motivated by the sudden death of a friend, and also by a monk who questioned him about the Confucian practice of encouraging people to serve their parents meat, yet espousing universal affection toward all living beings. As this account illustrates, his spiritual and intellectual quest was more concerned with ontological and soteriological issues. Although he seems to have found some insight through Son meditation, his quest did not stop there, but further impelled him to discern an intrinsic unity among the various philosophical and religious teachings of his time. His pseudonym was Tukt'ong, which means attainment of interpenetration; it is an apt title, as he diligently pursued this goal not merely in regard to Son and the Buddhist doctrinal teachings, but also in connection to all the existing teachings of his time. Dismissing the question as to which of the three teachings, Confucianism, Buddhism or Daoism, was superior, he instead felt that they were intrinsically identical. For Kihwa, the Daoist teachings of non-action and the Confucian teachings of being responsive but always calm were no different from the teaching of Son Buddhism, which espouses being: "Calm but always illuminating; illuminating but always calm."

Wonhyo's synthesis of the various doctrinal disputes was succeeded and developed by Chinul's syncretic view attesting to the unity of Son and scriptural teaching; this in turn was followed by Kihwa's harmonization of the three religious teachings. This tradition of the syncretic perspective in Korean Buddhism was further developed by Hyujong (1520–1604), known as Sosan Taesa (Great Master of the Western Mountain).

Hyujong was not only the central Buddhist figure during the Choson period, but also one of the most influential figures in the entire history of Korean Buddhism. He not only continued to propagate the syncretic perspective of the unity of Son and doctrinal teachings as formulated by Chinul, but he also attempted to reconcile the three teachings in terms of their ultimate message of truth.

By Hyujong's time, the various doctrinal schools had been reconfigured into one unified school, called Kyo, or scriptural teaching, while the Son schools were categorized under the single, unified name of Son. The conflict between Son and the doctrinal teachings still existed as an active point of controversy among Korean monks. As the titles of his major works, such as *Son'ga kwigam* ("The Mirror of the Son School"), *Son'gyo sok* ("An Interpretation of Son and Kyo") and *Son'gyo kyol* ("The Secret on Son and Kyo"), illustrate, Hyujong's major concern was to reconcile Son and the scriptural teachings by incorporating the doctrinal schools into Son. While generally agreeing with Chinul's syncretic teachings, Hyujong contrasted Son practice more sharply with Kyo and ultimately espoused Son's supremacy. He felt that since the intrinsic unity of Son and Kyo had already been clarified by the efforts of Chinul, his mission was not to reassert this point, but rather to establish a correct relationship between the two in terms of the means of attaining ultimate enlightenment.

According to Hyujong, the source of both Son and Kyo are the Buddha, but one refers to his mind and the other to his words. Regarding the relation between Son and Kyo, he asserted that Kyo is what reaches wordlessness from the word, while Son is what reaches wordlessness from wordlessness itself. Wordlessness means here the true nature of mind or the enlightenment state which cannot be reached through any verbal, logical description. By saying that both Kyo and Son reach wordlessness, however, Hyujong did not mean that one can reach the ultimate state through Kyo. Rather, he meant that Kyo, beginning with the word (that is, scriptural teaching), should be applied and then continued ultimately for the purpose of attaining the state of wordlessness. In other words, one may begin practice by studying Kyo, but in the process of attaining enlightenment, Kyo must be discarded and Son must be practised. This relation between Son and Kyo is well elaborated in his theory of *sagyo ipson*, the principle of abandoning Kyo and entering Son, which is still followed in present-day Korean Buddhism. In this way, Hyujong acknowledged the efficacy of Kyo as a part of Buddhist practice, yet he also asserted the supremacy of Son practice by postulating the limitations of intellectual understanding. Thus, he refused to recognize the possibility of attaining enlightenment through the use of Kyo alone. Of course, not every practitioner needs to follow both Kyo and Son practices successively. According to Hyujong, the person of high capacity may not find it necessary to follow both practices, but the person of middle or low capacity cannot omit doctrinal study, Kyo.

In his other work, *Samga Kwigam* ("Mirror of the Three Teachings"), Hyujong's purpose was to demonstrate that all of the three East Asian intellectual traditions, Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, ultimately lead to the truth, *to*, or the Way. The intrinsic unity of the three teachings was first expostulated by his predecessor, Kihwa. However, while Kihwa's approach can be said to incorporate Confucianism and Daoism into Buddhism, especially Son Buddhism, and thus ultimately to advocate the superior position of the Buddhist teaching, Hyujong's approach was different. He shows us the core or the essentials of the three teachings, and by doing so he reveals the similarities among the three, although he does not ignore their differences. He felt that to espouse the superiority of one teaching over another was to be guilty of sectarianism. In interpreting each teaching of the three religions, he used a higher perspective to reconcile their minor differences into the greater context of their intrinsic unity. His approach, the synthesis of discrepancies into a higher perspective, immediately reminds one of Wonhyo's method of *kae* (unfolding) and *hap* (folding): by unfolding discrepancies, the various functions of the truth are displayed, and by folding them, the discrepancies are reconciled into the essence of the truth itself. In the epilogue of the *Samga Kwigam*, he mentions that his intention is to provide a communication channel while overcoming the limits of sectarian views. He called the three teachings "three gates", indicating his perception of them as different means of attaining the ultimate goal. This goal, which is the realization of the ultimate truth, has often been termed *to*, or the Way, in the East Asian tradition, and carries no sectarian connotation. To realize this, one's mind-eye, or wisdom, is the key. Hyujong's all-inclusive spirit, which perpetuates the long syncretic tradition of Korean religious thought, continues to have a great impact on contemporary Korean Buddhism.

Colonial and Modern Period

It was not until 1895 that Korean Buddhists, enabled by Japanese Buddhism, were allowed officially to propagate their religion. Initially, Japanese Buddhism was a sort of "liberation army" to the Korean Buddhists. Before the ascendancy of nationalism of anti-Japanese sentiments it is not surprising that Korean Buddhists had a favorable impression towards Japanese Buddhism. With its impact on Korean society, Christianity posed a challenge to Korean Buddhism, and Korean Buddhists even considered Japanese Buddhism to be a favorable protection from the powerful religion from the West.

Korean Buddhists knew well that the "modernization of Buddhism" was the only option after five hundred years of long depression. It was too long away and anachronistic to return back to the past of Silla or Koryo, the Golden Eras of Korean Buddhism. Moreover, "entering into the modern society" and "attaining civilization and enlightenment" (*munmyong kaewha*) were common aspirations of the Korean people in a crisis of losing their country. In concert with such aspirations of the Korean society, Korean Buddhists had "modernization" as one of their paramount tasks to be carried out in so-called modern society. It was of utmost importance for Korean Buddhists to prove to themselves that Buddhism, a traditional religion, had modern utility, useful enough to survive in a new environment, the so-called modern society. Accordingly, they defined their religion as "philosophy" in order to prove Buddhism to be "scientific" and "rational," two characteristics of modernity; and they were not reluctant to include modern academic disciplines, such as biology, physics, geography, religious studies, history and so on, in new curriculums for training monks and nuns. Inspired by the social works of Christianity, as well as Japanese Buddhism in Korea, Korean Buddhists were also actively engaged in modern social service activities such as running hospitals, prison propagations, and so forth, endeavors all of which prove modern utility and social viability of Buddhism in modern society. In an attempt to achieve modernization, there were, at times, radical proposals that denied even their own old Buddhist traditions. In this regard we might mention that "clerical marriage" and the "abolishment of chanting halls", proposed by Manhae (1879-1944), were some of the most radical proposals among others. In as much as not reluctant in denying their own tradition, Korean Buddhists viewed with optimism their efforts to adapt themselves in a rapidly changing society. To the Korean Buddhist, a latecomer to the modern world, Japanese Buddhism as well as Christianity were rivals as well as challenges for them to overcome, but at same time, in terms of social viability and modern utility, they were models to follow.

While making various efforts to modernize Korean Buddhism, Korean Buddhists were encountered with another task: to secure an "identity of Korean Buddhism" distinct from that of Japanese Buddhism. Japanese Buddhism, after the systematic suppression of the Meiji government during in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, had been transformed into "national Buddhism" or "state Buddhism"; the Buddhism requiring loyalty to the Emperor; being beneficial to the state; and being committed to the national ideology. After the experience of the March First Movement in 1919 and the inevitable conflict between the colonizer and the colonized, Korean Buddhists recognized that an identity distinct from Japanese Buddhism was no less important than the modernization of Korean Buddhism.

From today's perspective, we might able to envision a model for Korean Buddhism that is different from Japanese Buddhism while pursuing modernization of Korean Buddhism. However, in the marginalized situation of Korean Buddhism, I think, it was almost impossible to think of a "third model." Five hundred years of suppression and financial resources as well as personnel resources were also far from being sufficient. The most decisive factor was, however, the fact that the religion of Japan, the colonizer, was Buddhism.

As in the case of the European colonies where the religion of the colonized was different from the colonizer, the traditional religion of the colonized would take a central position of engendering national resistance and creating a new national discourse against the colonizer. In the case of Korea, however, Christianity, a foreign religion of Korea, took such a role. Since Christianity was under the restraint of the anti-Christian policy of the colonial government, it was somehow in a position of being easily identified with Korean people who were also under the unjust Japanese colonial rule. And with this sympathetic sentiment of Korean people Christianity could become a "national religion" of Korea and the place of creating the "national discourse." While scholars in the field of modern Korean Buddhism postulate with no reservation that Japanese Buddhism as being the primary "other" to Korean Buddhism, this may not have been the case for the Korean Buddhists faced with a dilemma.

Undergoing a crisis in the early twentieth century, Korean intellectuals began to contemplate the concept of the "nation" that was not based on the "state" but on "ethnicity." In their contemplation history, religion, and language became important elements for constructing the "nation" and "national identity." "Civilization and enlightenment" (*munmyong kaewha*) and "nationalism" can be seen to be contradictory just as the two Buddhist agendas of "modernization" and "Korean identity" contradict each other. As Prof. Andre Schmid demonstrates in a persuasive manner, however, Korean intellectuals appropriated accordingly "civilization and enlightenment" (*munmyong kaewha*) and "nationalism" as *one* discourse in the early twentieth century. In other words, what is useful is good for Korea in the name of "civilization and enlightenment" (*munmyong kaewha*). In the case of Christianity, for example, despite its foreign origin, it could be beneficial to the Korean people in the name of "civilization and enlightenment" (*munmyong kaewha*); if beneficial to the Korean people it could be a fitting religion for Korean people. In this way of thinking it was not unnatural to consider Christianity as a national religion for Koreans. Christianity, since the twentieth century, equated with civilization, modern education including the education for women, and occupied a central space for creating a "national discourse." During and after the early modern period, Christianity was even considered as being potentially the only possible counter-proposal by which to help escape from the fetters of Japanese colonial rule. That Christianity was different from the religion of the colonizer and was under colonial restraint enabled the favorable appearance of Christianity as a national religion for Korean people.

This was not the case of Korean Buddhism, however. The religion of Japan, the colonizer, was Buddhism, and Japanese Buddhism was seen as the most successful model for modern Buddhism in Asia then: the lay Buddhist intellectuals played an integral role in Buddhism; Buddhism was taught as one of the modern academic disciplines in colleges and universities; social work, in a modern sense, also became an important component of religious propagation, of which method and contents were completely different from traditional Buddhism. For it was not easy, if not impossible, for Korean Buddhists to separate modernization of Korean Buddhism from Japanese Buddhism and conflate modernization of Korean Buddhism with nationalism since modern Buddhism was introduced by Japanese Buddhism.

Due to this dilemmatic situation clerical marriage emerged as a pivotal issue for modern Korean Buddhism. Some of Korean monks considered clerical marriage to be an important component of Japanese Buddhism, while others viewed clerical marriage to be a feature of "modern Buddhism" and not necessarily a Japanese trait. The former thought that with just the elimination of clerical marriage from Japanese Buddhism, Japanese Buddhism could be seen as a model reference for modern Korean Buddhism and consequently distinguish modern Buddhism from Japanese Buddhism. This was the case of conservative reformers such as Paek Yongsong (1863-1940) or Paek Hangmyong (1878-1944). While they only viewed negatively "clerical marriage" they were not quite reluctant to accept some of the modern features of Japanese Buddhism, such as the modern education for monks, the urban dissemination of Buddhism, and the importance of lay Buddhist intellectuals. Meanwhile those who had a more flexible stance on clerical marriage saw that "clerical marriage" was an indispensable for the modernization of Korean Buddhism, and was not necessarily harmful for the identity of Korean Buddhism. Manhae (1879-1944), a well-known progressive reformer of modern Korean Buddhism, is an exemplary case. For Manhae the main problem of Japanese Buddhism was its nature of being a state religion, and he thought that in order to secure an identity of Korean Buddhism it was more crucial to be free from colonial rule; this explaining why he continued to advocate the separation of politics and religion (or the separation of state and church) in his w" was, I think, on one hand to save Buddhism from the nationalism in a narrow sense, and on the other hand to change traditional, monk-centered Buddhism to the Buddhism of the populace, which in fact meant the embrace of clerical marriage. This was, he thought, the way of modernizing Korean Buddhism while securing the identity of Korean Buddhism. Not viewing clerical marriage as an essential trait of Japanese Buddhism, Manhae thought that through freedom from colonial control government the identity of Korean Buddhism could be secured, and with the new system of clerical marriage, modern utility of Korean Buddhism could be achieved. However astute a proposal, even from today's viewpoint, "clerical marriage" was seen as an essential element of Japanese Buddhism, and failed to gain the general consensus of the Korean Buddhists. "Modernization" and "Korean identity" were, throughout the history of modern Korean Buddhism, considered to be incompatible and self-contradictory

While this dilemma situation continued, Korean Buddhism faced another adversity: general mobilization efforts for the Sino-Japanese war in 1936. From then on, so-called "pro-Japanese" or "anti-Japanese" came to be significant issues for modern Korean Buddhism, in terms of giving support to or collaborating with the Japanese war campaign. Under this "general mobilization" for the Japanese war campaign, Korean Buddhists incessantly agonized over "modernization" and "Korean identity", and suffered the brutality of the Japanese military system until liberation from colonial rule in 1945.

Conclusion

Since Buddhism was introduced into the Korean peninsula during the latter half of the fourth century, Korean Buddhism has undergone three major paradigm shifts. The first occurred as a response to Korea's indigenous belief system, which may be characterized as shamanistic animism; this period extends from Buddhism's incipient stage to the Three Kingdoms period. The second shift represents the Korean effort to understand various doctrines and corresponds to the Unified Silla and Koryo periods. The third shift involved the defense of Buddhism from the criticisms of neo-Confucianism during the Choson period. Each paradigm shift represented a Buddhist response to challenges from either within or outside itself; in this way, Korean Buddhist philosophy developed continually. The new understandings which occurred at each shift did not disappear with the next shift, but rather remained as integral aspects of the Korean Buddhist tradition.

Buddhism's first challenge came from the indigenous shamanistic beliefs which had helped to consolidate the various tribes of the peninsula into unified kingdoms. The Korean Buddhist response was *hoguk pulgyo*, or state-protection Buddhism. Lectures on Buddhist sutras as well as ceremonies to ensure national security were held regularly during the Koryo period. Even during the Choson period, when Buddhism was suppressed, the tradition of *hoguk pulgyo* continued in modified form as armed monks organized into armies to resist the Japanese invasion. Although the concept of *hoguk pulgyo* was never elaborated into a sophisticated philosophy, it is nevertheless a pervasive element in the development of Korean Buddhism.

In the second shift characterizing the Koreanization of Buddhism, both Wonhyo and Chinul played pivotal roles. By Wonhyo's time, the major Buddhist texts, as well as the doctrines of the numerous Chinese Buddhist schools, had been introduced to Korea. Wonhyo, using his own hermeneutics of *kae* (unfolding) and *hap* (folding), and his *hwajaeng* (reconciliation of disputes) theory, attempted to reconcile the various doctrinal disputes. In doing so, he neither accepted nor denied any one sectarian perspective. While refusing to accept any one particular doctrine as the whole truth, he recognized all doctrines as the unfolding of one mind, or the Buddha-nature. On the other hand, by "folding" the various disputes, he synthesized them into a higher perspective of the truth. This approach reflected the fundamental spirit of Korean Buddhism, which preferred to emphasize the similarities rather than the discrepancies among Buddhist schools and among other religions. Thus the primary characteristic of Korean Buddhism, *t'ong pulgyo*, the Buddhism of total interpenetration, began with Wonhyo. It was Chinul, during the Koryo period, who attempted to reconcile the disputes between Son and Hwaom, the latter representing the scriptural tradition in Korean Buddhism. To establish a new approach to Son, he assimilated the theoretical framework of Hwaom, long considered to be the antithesis of the Son approach.

The third shift came from the challenge of neo-Confucianism, which became the new state ideology of the Choson dynasty. Kihwa, and later Hyujong, attempted to maintain the tradition of Chinul's syncretic approach to Son while at the same time creating the theoretical framework for the intrinsic unity of the three major intellectual traditions of Korea and all East Asia: Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. Continuing the approach, begun by Wonhyo and Chinul, of reconciling disputes by way of a higher perspective, Hyujong suggested that each of the three teachings is a gate leading to the same goal, that is, the *to*, or Way.

In the early twentieth century, Korean Buddhists, together with the rest of their countrymen, suffered from colonization by Japan. During this time, from 1910 to 1945, many Korean Buddhist monks such as Master Yongsong (1864–1940), Master Hanyong (1870–1948) and, most notably, Master Manhae (1879–1944) became engaged in a variety of political activities. These worldly involvements, which pulled them away from their practice in the mountains, were undertaken in the bodhisattva spirit, that is, as a means of helping to directly alleviate the suffering of others. Due to their participation in these activities, philosophical study was also undermined. Those monks who wished to study Buddhism on a scholarly level travelled to Japan and enrolled in universities there. Japanese Buddhists in turn left their own country for Europe and absorbed the Western perspective from such countries as England, Germany and France. They gradually incorporated this new knowledge into their previous systems of understanding, and in the process Japanese Buddhist philosophy was significantly altered. The Korean monks who visited Japan were exposed to this new perspective and dutifully introduced it to their fellow Buddhists upon returning to Korea. From this time also, Buddhism began to be taught in the universities.

This period marks the beginning of a bifurcation between monks and scholars, the significance of which became increasingly reflected in Buddhist scholarship.

In the 1970s and 1980s the philosophical study of Buddhism began to re-appear with renewed interest and energy. This was due to both external and internal factors: externally, Korean Buddhism faced new challenges from the West, primarily in the forms of Christianity and Western philosophy, while internally, the division between monks and scholars had become even more pronounced. In the 1980s a debate arose among monks and scholars over the issue of "sudden" versus "gradual". Although this debate centred around the age-old conflict between direct experience and intellectual understanding, and thus between Son and doctrinal schools, due to the above-mentioned influences the conflict has become a new focus for modern Korean Buddhist thought. The debate itself has become well known not only throughout Korea but internationally as well. Yet to this day, no satisfactory resolution has been reached: some emphasize the importance of direct experience while others stress the necessity of intellectual understanding. Perhaps the conflict cannot be resolved, and this may be a reflection of our times. Yet what seems to be called for is a new methodology with which to consider the problem. The *t'ong pulgyo*'s perspective is unique to Korea and has served well in the past. Can Korean Buddhists find another way to embrace the understanding which it signifies, or do they need to discover an altogether different means of confronting the issue, one that stands outside of *t'ong pulgyo*? The times are unique; certainly any approach towards resolving the difficulties must be unique as well.

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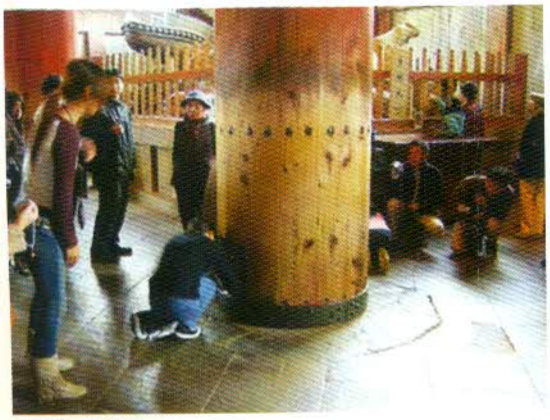
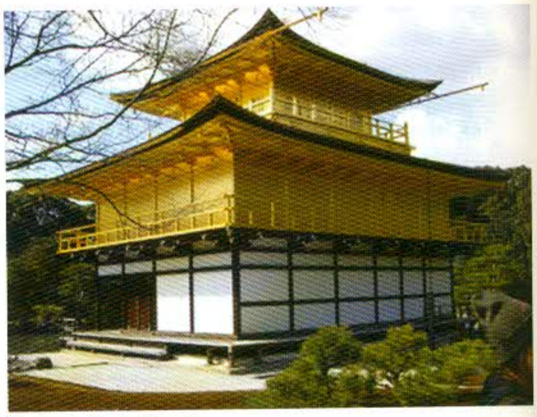
The Daibutsu, great Buddha - Kamakura-kanto



Healing Piller

Guardian Statue



Kinkauji - Kyoto-Kangai

ESSAY 21

Buddhism in Japan

Toshi ichi Endo

Introduction of Buddhism to Japan:

'Shinto' or 'the way of gods' is an indigenous religion of Japan existed prior to the introduction of Buddhism and has remained to be a dominant faith till today along with Buddhism and Confucianism. Its origin is not known, but probably derived from shamanistic beliefs. It is polytheistic having no creed in the strict sense of the term, and lacks profound system of philosophy compatible with Buddhism. It is a somewhat disorderly mixture of the veneration of ancestors and nature worship. The myths and beliefs associated with Shinto were codified in the *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters) and *Nihoshoki* (Chronicles of Japan) composed in 712 and 720 respectively. The definition of Shinto can be best understood by the following definition given by the 18th century Shinto revivalist Norinaga Motoori (1730-1801 A.D.):

"The word *kami* (god) refers, in the most general sense, to all divine beings of heaven and earth that appear in the classics. More particularly, the *kami* are the spirits that abide in and are worshipped at the shrines. In principle human beings, birds, animals, trees, plants, mountains, oceans - all may be *kami*. According to ancient usage, whatever seemed strikingly impressive, possessed the quality of excellence, or inspired a feeling of awe was called *kami*."[1]

This definition demonstrates that anyone or anything could be raised to the level of a *kami* (god) if a person or a thing possesses the unique and wonderful quality. Shinto, unlike Buddhism, has not developed the notion of life spirit after death, though since it is the way to gods, Shinto does accept at least one life after death. Shinto is largely concerned with existence in this life, and takes life as a creative and vital force. One of the most important practice of Shinto concerning the social lives of the Japanese is the *matsuri* (festival). Its manifestation can be seen at various stages in the passage of life. Shinto however became eventually intermingled with Buddhist ideas, and some of its gods came to play a vital role as guardian deities of Buddhism.

Before the official introduction of Buddhism, there existed in Japan several provinces administered to by different *uji* (clan). This period from about the 3rd century A.D. is referred to as *kofun* (tomb) or *uji* (clan) culture in history. Among the provincial clans there emerged a powerful clan who, by unifying several provinces of Japan, came to be called the Yamato, and it was from this clan that all emperors of Japan hailed. There arose among the rest three clans who became reasonably powerful and became subordinate to the Yamato imperial family. They became powerful alternately changing the political scene from time to time particularly in the governing body serving the imperial family. The three clans are the Soga who were in charge of the management of the imperial estates and finances; the Mononobe who were responsible for the military affairs of the imperial family; and the Nakatomi in charge of the rituals and ceremonies of the imperial family. In the 6th century, it was the Soga who became more powerful and influential over the imperial family. Buddhism was introduced under this political set-up from Paekche, one of the three kingdoms in the Korean peninsula which were at war with one another at the time. The king of Paekche sent a bronze Buddha image together with Buddhist scriptures to the Yamato court in 552 A.C. This is the official date of the introduction of Buddhism to Japan according to the *Nihonshoki* (Chronicles of Japan).

Emperor Kinmei (531-571) during whose reign Buddhism was introduced to Japan was impartial to the question of whether to accept it or not. However, the Soga who were well aware that Buddhism with its concomitant skills and technology was instrumental in economically developing neighboring nations including the Korean peninsula, argued in favor of accepting Buddhism, while the other two Mononobe and Nakatomi were against it on the grounds that the native gods would be provoked by the presence of a foreign faith in Japan. In these political circumstances the emperor took a decision to allow the Soga to keep the Buddha image and the Buddhist scriptures for private worship. It is however said that soon after the introduction of Buddhism there occurred a plague affecting the capital and its people. This provided a golden opportunity for the Mononobe and Nakatomi to once again rise against the Soga and their power, and the building that housed the Buddha image was destroyed and the image thrown into the Naniwa river. The whole event subsequently led to a political instability in Japan till the time of the great statesman and advocate of Buddhism, Prince Shotoku.

Prince Sh¯toku and Buddhism:

The first emperor to officially support Buddhism was Yomei (reign: 585-587 A.D.), the father of Prince Shotoku (574-622). He requested when he fell sick that an image of *Yakushi-nyorai* (*Bhaisajyaguru*) should be made in the hope of his speedy recovery. But he did not live long to see the completion of this image, which took nearly twenty years to complete. He was succeeded by his sister Empress Suiko (592-628), who in turn immediately appointed his nephew Prince Shotoku, just 19 years old at the time, to the post of Regent in 592. The Soga who were powerful at the time became responsible for political manipulation behind the appointment of Prince Shotoku. Whatever the political ambition of the Soga may have been, it is by Prince Shotoku that Buddhism was made the state religion within a short spell of time after its introduction, and he made great contribution to its spread in Japan.

It is believed that Buddhism, among other things, played a fairly important role in his early education considering the fact that his father was the first emperor to embrace it officially and that Japan learnt the various forms of art and culture from Korea including Buddhism before his arrival in the history of Japanese politics. Legends tell us that Prince Shotoku was a clever boy capable of listening to and comprehending ten people talking simultaneously. Such legends must have gathered around him much later when his contribution to Buddhism and statesmanship were duly recognized in later times.

Buddhism at that time was viewed and understood as possessing magical power for the protection and prosperity of the nation and its people, much similar to Korean Buddhism in early days. It was believed to have a magical power to cure illnesses and aversion to calamities. Prince Shotoku, however, found in Buddhism inspiration and ideals which could steer the nation in the right direction of development. He was indeed the first Japanese ruler who could comprehend the profound philosophy of Buddhism and applied its principles to his political, personal and religious fields of activity.

The first notable contribution of Prince Shotoku comes when he issued an imperial ordinance upholding the Three Treasures of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha immediately after assuming office as Regent in 592; thus making Buddhism the state religion of Japan. The application of Buddhism to political and social spheres is well reflected in his 'Seventeen-Article Constitution' promulgated in 604. Prince Shotoku's understanding of Buddhism is well reflected in his alleged deathbed quotation from the *Dhammapada* (verse No.183). He was very much convinced that the Buddha alone was true and real, and this world [for the unenlightened] was illusion. He is believed to have written commentaries on three important Mahayana texts, namely, the *Srimala Sinhanada sutra* (*Shomangyo*), the *Vimalakirti nirdesa sutra* (*Yuimangyo*) and the *Saddharmapundarika sutra* (*Hokekyo*), and lectured on them from time to time. In the field of social service, he was credited with the construction of bridges, causeways, rest-houses for travelers, hospitals not only for human beings but also for animals, etc. He is sometimes compared to King Asoka of India. In the field of architecture, he was responsible for the construction of the Horyuji Temple, the oldest wooden structure extant in the world today, and the Shiten'noji Temple. According to the census taken two years after Shotoku's death, Japan had acquired 46 temples probably with a considerable contribution to their construction by Korean immigrants.

Culturally, the most important event that took place under the leadership of Prince Shotoku was the dispatch of official envoys to China in 607. Students and monks who went to China brought back new ideas and played an essential role in the development of Buddhism and Japanese culture in subsequent times. The establishment of direct contact between Japan and China marked the dawn of a new era for Japan, and since then till the fall of T'ang dynasty in China, Japan continued to send envoys to bring back virtually everything of China including Buddhism.

After the death of Prince Shotoku, the Soga devoted themselves to the advancement of their personal ambitions, which in subsequent times led to a rebellion against them by the other clans, until finally they were completely defeated in a successful *coup d'etat* in 645. Under the guidance of Prince Naka no Oe (the future Emperor Tenchi) and the Nakatomi clan leader planned to establish a strong centralized government modeled after the style of T'ang China. This political reform came to be known as the Taika Reform which began in 645. The centralized government was aimed at stabilizing political sway over Japan and for this purpose introduced a new system of taxation and methods of its implementation. The major change in the Taika Reform was the abolishment of private landholdings. As for Buddhism from the time of the Taika Reform up to the beginning of the Nara period in 710, the most noticeable advancement was in the increase of court rituals.

Buddhism in the Nara Period (710-794):

Direct contacts with China brought about a rapid transformation of Japan both politically and culturally.

The Taika Reform and its socio-political implications necessitated the establishment of a permanent capital. Prior to this, the seat of government was the place of emperor's residence. This may have been influenced by the Shinto thinking that death was 'impure'. However, a permanent capital was established in Nara in 710 marking a stable government and social order convenient to the furtherance of culture and Buddhist learning. Buddhism had its long history from India to China spanning more than a thousand years. Chinese Buddhism was the culmination of such a long historical and doctrinal development of Buddhism. Japan could therefore experiment to extract what was really needed for Japan and its people when six Buddhist sects prevalent in China were introduced during the Nara period. It was the first exposure of the Japanese to theology and highly systematized schools of Buddhist thought. All this was made possible because of the political will and cultural zeal among aristocrats. The circumstances of Nara Buddhism would make us infer that it was the time of further learning. This is the very reason why the Nara Buddhism is generally characterized as scholastic rather than something for spiritual advancement. The future course of Buddhism in Japan was thus determined particularly during this period.

The six Buddhist sects introduced to Japan during the Nara period are as follows:

1. Kusha school
2. Jojitsu school
3. Sanron school
4. Hosso school
5. Kegon school
6. Ritsu school

The Kusha school is based on the text called *Abhidharmakosa* and the school was named after this text. The Jojitsu was established on the basis of the text named *Satyasiddhi*. The Sanron has the philosophy based on the Three Treatises of Nagarjuna. The Hosso is another name for the *Vijnanavada* or *Yogacara* of India. The *Avatamsaka sutra* became the basis of the Kegon school while the Ritsu school emphasized the importance of the Vinaya texts. The Ritsu school is of special interest for Buddhism in Japan for the reason that its founder Ganjin, a Chinese Vinaya master who arrived in Japan in 753 after several unsuccessful attempts, established the formal initiation or ordination ceremony in Japan. Though these schools are given different names, they are not strictly independent of one another where no freedom is granted to move from one school to another even for the purpose of acquiring knowledge. Instead, anyone could study any text or doctrine of different denomination.

However, particularly towards the end of the Nara period when sufficient political and social recognition was accorded to Buddhism, corruption of varied degrees began to set in among the Buddhist clergy. This was inevitable as some of the Buddhist monks and nuns had close relations with the imperial family and aristocrats. The acquisition of wealth by the Sa°gha and power vested in them was another factor for corruption to the Buddhists institutions. The most disturbing event was when a Buddhist monk of the Hosso sect named Dokyo, who was a distant relation in the line of Emperor Tenchi (626-671), tried to ascend the throne for personal gain. This was averted in time and immediately led to a number of reforms within the imperial family and the government such as that an emperor should hail from within the imperial family and not from outside.

Buddhism during this period left indelible mark in various cultural fields in Japan. Education, literature, architecture, painting, and other aspects of art came under direct influence of Chinese culture through Buddhism. However such cultural activities were mainly confined to the aristocrats, and the large populace were left untouched by it. This was due to the monopoly of Buddhism and Chinese culture among the aristocrats only.

Although Buddhism was well recognized and supported by the state in the Nara period, Shinto was also practiced widely, and encouragement was given to the Buddhists and the believers of the indigenous faith Shinto to unify both faiths. This process in early phases of time was known as "*Shimbutsu Shugo* " (unification of gods and Buddhas). The idealistic Buddhists accepted this encouragement by the government for the reason that Buddhism could reach the masses, while the Shintoists too acceded to it because of the expectation of the same benefits as given to the Buddhist institutions. This assimilation of native gods into the Buddhist pantheon as guardian gods was an important and useful process in the evolution of Buddhism in Japan.

Buddhism in the Heian Period (794-1185):

The Buddhist Sangha fell into institutional corruption mainly due to the state sponsorship extended to them which eventually resulted in complacency forgetting about the goal of a renunciant. Emperor Kanmu (737-806), witnessing a great danger posed by the ecclesiastic circle, finally decides to move the capital from Nara. This was coupled with his strategic move to quell the Ezo rebellion in the north. He first shifted the capital from Nara to a place named Nagaoka in 781, then in 794 to Kyoto where it would remain until 1868, the beginning of the Meiji period. The influence of the religious bodies of Nara, as expected, began to wane gradually. But instead a new type of religious movement emerged and became influential.

Buddhism in the Heian period paved the way for the beginning of more native nature of Buddhism than what it was in the Nara period. It became much closer to the hearts of the Japanese than ever before, and could be considered as the beginning of truly the Japanese Buddhism. During the early days of the Heian period, two Buddhist schools were introduced from China, namely, the Tendai school and the Shingon school. The former is the Japanese version of the T'ien-t'ai school while the latter is an esoteric form of Buddhism.

Saicho (767-822), the founder of the Japanese Tendai school, probably was well aware of the defects of the Nara Buddhism and would have thought of rectifying the mistakes committed by the Nara Buddhist monks went to a small hermitage on Mt.Hiei which would become the head quarters of the sect subsequently. When the emperor requested Saicho to be the official monk to be dispatched to China in 804, he readily accepted it and went to China to study the T'ien-t'ai teachings. Just before his return to Japan, he met a Tantric master and was initiated into esoterism, an incident which would drastically change the future direction not only of the Tendai school but also the life of Saicho himself.

The Tendai school of Saicho was not an exact copy of the T'ien-t'ai school of China. Saicho, before he went to China, studied Tendai doctrines, while he was also interested in Zen (Ch'an) meditation, the Vinaya, the Pure Land *nembutsu*, etc. This mixture of everything embodied in the teachings of the Japanese Tendai school lent hand to the rise of different schools of Buddhism in Japan in subsequent times particularly during the Kamakura period (1192-1333). Founders of such schools as the Soto Zen school and Nichiren school underwent their initial training at Mt. Hiei, the headquarters of the Tendai school.

The kind of esoteric Buddhism Saicho fortuitously brought from China is known as *enmitsu* as against Kukai's *tomitsu*. When Saicho brought it along with the texts of the T'ien-t'ai teachings, the court became interested in the esoteric texts. Meanwhile Kukai (774-835), the other great Buddhist leader of the Heian period, who went to China in the same year as Saicho, was very clear in his mission to go to China. He embarked on his journey for the sole purpose of studying esoteric Buddhism in China. When a list of texts brought from China was submitted to the emperor as was the case for Saicho as well, the emperor became quite interested in works of esoteric Buddhism. This forced Saicho to secretly learn it from Kukai, and the relationship between them deteriorated until finally they split up.

The basic text for Saicho's Tendai school is the Lotus Sutra (*Saddharmasundarika sutra*). Other texts of the school include the *Mahaparinirvana sutra*, *Mahaprajnaparamita sutra*, etc. Saicho's Tendai school is known for its teaching called the 'Five Periods and Eight Doctrines' which classification is based on the Buddha's chronological life and also on the method and nature of his teachings.

Kukai (774-835), the founder of the Japanese Shingon school (esoteric Buddhism), went to the then capital Nagaoka to study Chinese poetry and Confucian classics before turning to Buddhism. He lived for a considerable period in the mountains engaged in practice. During this seclusion, he came across certain esoteric practices and encountered the *Mahavairocana sutra*. The reading of it made him conclude that this work epitomized all that he sought in Buddhism. He went to China in search of texts and real transmission of the Tantric Buddhism. Unlike Saicho, he went to China as a private scholar monk. Upon returning from China, his potential was not fully recognized by the court as Saicho had already been considered a teacher of Tantric Buddhism. This political manipulation caused a great delay in recognizing the contribution made by Kukai.

Kukai's Shingon school was finally recognized in 835 a few months before his death. He built the head quarters of his school on Mt. Koya. His doctrines were based mainly on the *Mahavairocana sutra* which reveals the *Garbhakosa dhatu* (*taizokai*) *mandala* and also presents the *upaya* of the three Tantric principles (body, speech and mind) that allow the individual to enter into the Buddha nature inherent in all sentient beings. The teachings of the Shingon school can be outlined in terms of the ten stages of development in the awakening of the mind to enlightenment.

The idea of the unification of Shinto and Buddhism goes back to the Nara period, but a new theoretical basis was gradually emerging. It is called the '*Honji Suijaku*' (True Nature-Manifestation) theory. Originated in China, the Japanese application of the theory was to the relationship between Buddhist deities and the indigenous *kami* (gods). Under this many Shinto *kami* were designated as guardian gods of Buddhism.

The Rise of Pure Land Devotion:

When Saicho introduced the T'ien-t'ai teachings from China to Japan, he laid emphasis on meditation. One of the four varieties of meditation based on the physical posture utilized for the purpose is called '*jogyo-sammai*' (perpetual practice of walking) in which an image of the Buddha Amida (Skt. *Amitabha* – 'Immeasurable Light' or *Amitayus* – 'Immeasurable Life') is the central figure. The practitioner chants the *nembutsu* (calling upon the name of Amida Buddha) for ninety days while circumambulating the image. However, at this stage of development, rebirth in the Pure Land was not an important concept. Thus it can be said that Saicho laid the foundation for Japanese Pure Land teaching.

During the Heian period, Kuya (903-72) became an important propagator of Pure Land devotion. He mingled with the masses, travelling through countryside and spread '*dancing-nembutsu*'. He took Buddhism to the ordinary men unlike other Buddhist leaders who were more concerned with acceptance among the aristocrats of the day. Genshin (942-1017), also a follower of the Tendai sect, composed the *Ojoyoshu* (Essentials of Salvation), an important theological study, with fervent devotion to Amida Buddha. He showed in it two ways of *nembutsu*: meditation and recitation, of which the latter was given greater emphasis. Although the growing prevalence of Amida worship was evident, the *nembutsu* was not yet practiced independently of traditional Buddhist sects. It was Honen (1133-1212) who separated Amida Buddha devotion from other practices of Holy Path. This marked the establishment of an independent sect of Pure Land Buddhism (Jodo school) in Japan for the first time.

Politically, Japan plunged into a series of civil wars particularly between the two main rival clans, the Taira and the Minamoto, which ended with the establishment of the Kamakura government by the latter in 1185. Further, natural calamities such as earthquakes, floods, and fires within short intervals caused untold hardships among the masses. Such a political and social chaos experienced by the people of Japan at that time would certainly be construed as the dawn of a decadent age. Under the circumstances, Amida Buddha worship with the promise that one could attain birth in his Pure Land after death captured the imagination of the masses.

Among able disciples of Honen was Shinran (1173-1263), founder of the J¯do Shin school. He also advocated the practice of *nembutsu* like his predecessors, but with a difference. J¯do Shin sect's theology is basically oriented towards those who have already attained the stages of self-awareness, which, in other words, can be termed as the recognition of faith as a starting point of a Buddhist way of life. They are the individuals capable of recognizing deceitful guises of the ego. The basis of attitude toward life in J¯do Shin school is a profound self-reflection – an act that makes one painfully aware of the total futility and absurdity of all one's actions. Soteriologically, this deep conviction becomes a springboard to totally surrender oneself to the power of the Amida Buddha, whose grace is summed up by Shinran in his famous statement: "If even a good man can be born in the Realm of Purification, much more so an evil man."

Mappo (Degeneration of the True Dharma):

The origin of this theory is not certain, but some evidence can be found in the earliest texts such as *Samyutta-nikaya* and a few more in the Pali Canon,[2] suggesting that such a danger was already present even during the early days of the Buddhist Order in India. The basic concept of this theory is that there would be a time when the true Dharma suffers degeneration and decline owing to both internal and external corruption that might arise in the Sangha. Subsequent political and social changes over the centuries in India may also have contributed to the furtherance of this theory among the Buddhists till such time that they witnessed the decline and disappearance of the true Dharma.

The concept of *mappo* arrived in Japan during the Nara period. It did not, however, capture the public imagination at that time. When the people began to witness political unrest as a result of a power struggle between the then powerful warrior classes, the Taira and the Minamoto, and natural calamities such as a great fire devastating the capital in 1177, a famine in approximately 1134 and 1181, etc. in the late Heian period, this *mappo* theory became a living reality in Japan. As a means to overcome and counteract socio-political chaos and instability faced by many people and spiritual insecurity, Amida pietism was disseminated and became quite popular among the masses. Scenes of hell described in Genshin's *Ojoyoshu* became a popular reproduction at the time.

The theory underwent several developmental stages even in China. A classification of periods into three was finally made by a Chinese T'ien-t'ai monk called Hui-szu (515-577) and specific numbers of years are assigned to them:

1 True Teachings (*shobo*) - 500 years
After the death of the Buddha, when the teaching, practice and attainment of Buddhist doctrines were possible.

2 Simulated Teachings (*zobo*) - 1,000 years
When only the teaching and practice remain.

3 Degeneration (*mappo*) - 10,000 years
When the teaching alone remains and there is no longer any practice or attainment.[3]

It certainly gave rise to the idea that the ancient method of attaining enlightenment relying upon one's own effort (*jiriki*) was no longer valid and possible, and instead one has to rely on an external agent (*tariki*) for release from this world of suffering. Under these circumstances, Pure Land devotion quickly gained its religious position among the masses for its simple yet powerful practice of *nembutsu*, prayer to the Amida Buddha.

Buddhism in the Kamakura Period (1192-1333):

Historically speaking, the founding of the Jodo school by Honen or Jodo Shin school by Shinran fall in the Kamakura period. However, the end of Heian period was crucial and instrument in leading to the emergence of these two schools. Honen was about 13 years old when he entered Mt. Hiei (Tendai headquarters). After a long search for personal enlightenment, he finally found that '*nembutsu*' was the only way to salvation. He then founded *senju* (single practice) *nembutsu* in 1175. Since then he attracted many followers. The establishment of the Jodo school was officially recognized in 1186.

Jodo Shin school was founded by Shinran (1173-1262), a disciple of Honen (he joined Honen's movements in 1202 and later together with Honen he was exiled in 1207). He first entered Mt. Hiei like Honen and studied Buddhism for a considerable period. Shinran became controversial because of his alleged marriage while being a monk. It is however a common belief that some Buddhist monks even before the time of Shinran had secret wives, and some even openly married. The importance of Shinran's marriage lies in that he was responsible for the creation of blood succession, a unique feature of the Jodo Shin sect. His marriage is considered as a concrete expression of his religious principle called "*hiso-hizoku*" (neither monk nor layman).

Shinran's method of propagating the teaching of *nembutsu* was to establish a meeting place at a modified private home known as a *nembutsu dojo*. Such places, however, became subjected to censor by the government in later times because of abuses of power by some leaders. Shinran was thus forced to purify some *nembutsu dojo*s particularly in the district of Kanto (in and around the present Tokyo).

Theologically, Shinran took the stand that devotion or faith in the Amida Buddha must surge from the bottom of one's heart. The intellectual understanding of this faith is merely superficial. When one is in a deep sense of despair, having realized that none could help him out, then true sense of faith in the Amida Buddha surges. He realizes that the Amida Buddha is the only one on whom he can depend for his salvation. This philosophy underlies an important remark made by Shinran that even sinners are capable of attaining salvation by the grace of the Amida Buddha. One of the differences observed between the Jodo school and Jodo Shin school concerns the practice of calling upon the name of the Amida Buddha (*nembutsu*). The former encourages the followers to pray to the Amida Buddha several times daily, while the latter believes that the prayer with sincere mind and devotion once in a life time would be sufficient to be saved by the Amida Buddha.

The Kamakura period witnessed the emergence of two more Buddhist schools. They were the Zen school and the Nichiren school. Zen Buddhism has two main branches called the Soto Zen school and the Rinzai Zen school. The former was founded by Dogen (1200-1253) and the latter by Eisai (1146-1215). The schools emerged after the Jodo and Jodo Shin schools advocate the completely opposite position as far as religious ideology goes that one's salvation must be worked out through one's own effort (*jiriki*). Zen Buddhism is the typical example of this type.

It is well known that even early Buddhism emphasizes the importance of meditation as an aid for the attainment of *nirvana*. The word '*Zen*' ('Ch'an' in Chinese and derived from the Sanskrit term '*dhyana*' - concentration of mind or meditation) signifies the nature of the school. The founder of Zen in China is historically said to be an Indian monk, Bodhidharma who went to China to establish the school. Since then the transmission started in the line of patriarchs in China. It was intermingled with the Taoist thoughts and became a religion of the Chinese people soon. In the seventh century A.D. Ch'an Buddhism produced two able masters both claiming the position of the 6th patriarch. One was Hui-neng (638-713) and the other Shen-hsiu. A division thus took place between them. The former became responsible for the rise of a movement known as the Southern School of Ch'an Buddhism, which is otherwise called the school of 'Sudden Enlightenment', while the latter became the founder of a sect designated as the Northern School, or the school of 'Gradual Enlightenment'. Dogen introduced the Northern School of Ch'an Buddhism to Japan while Eisai brought the school of 'Sudden Enlightenment.'

Zen Buddhism advocates that it does not rely upon words nor intellectual analysis of things. It is intuitive and concerned with direct insight into the true nature of things. Bodhidharma's following remark will certainly tell us the nature of Zen Buddhism:

> "A special tradition outside the scriptures;
> No dependence upon words and letters;
> Direct pointing at the soul of man;
> Seeing into one's own true, and the attainment of Buddhahood."[4]

Zen Buddhism can be regarded as the most important

Buddhist school in terms of lasting influence exercised upon every aspect of the cultural life of the Japanese people. It initially attracted the warrior class for the reason that simplicity, and perhaps austerity, is the hallmark of its practical application. Life of a warrior is life and death. Zen Buddhism teaches that one must go beyond this duality of life and death. Once he realizes going beyond of dualism, he fears neither death nor life; he attains no-mind (*mushin*) or no-thought (*munen*) which allows him to look at his own life and death in a dispassionate way. Zen Buddhism in fact influenced the warriors in two ways; morally and philosophically. Philosophically, it is the destruction of dualism and when the mind attains to this state, there is a vast opening of compassion ahead of him. When one transcends life and death, one's mind becomes flexible and has no fixing. Mind is just like water or air filling any shape or space unhindered. If the mind is trained this way, one can face any situation. This is what is expected of a *samurai*. It is '*mushin*' or '*munen*'.

Zen philosophy is said to have influenced the Samurai who were the main actors in the cultural activities in Japan. Swordsmanship, tea-ceremony, Zen gardens, calligraphy, painting, Noh drama, and Haiku poetry are a few examples where Zen spirit is seen. In this sense it may be said that Zen influenced Japanese culture much more than any other school of Buddhist thought.

The Kamakura period witnessed the emergence of another school. By this time Buddhism really became a religion of the masses incorporating truly native ingredients. Nichiren (1222-1282) founded the Nichiren school during the Kamakura period. The school is unique, firstly because this is the only major school of Buddhism in Japan which has the founder's name for the sect, and secondly because this is the school which openly denounced other Buddhist schools in a very strong term. Nichiren upholds that the *Saddharmapundarika sutra* is the only teaching of the Buddha. His famous work named "*Treatise on Spreading Peace Throughout the Country by Establishing the True Dharma*" (*Rissho Ankoku-ron*) advocates that evils and calamities the country was undergoing were the result of following different Buddhist sects, and as such denounced all other sects. The teachings of this school are rather aggressive and because of that, Nichiren was exiled a couple of times.

Buddhism in the Muromachi Period (1338-1573):

After the collapse of the Kamakura shogunate in 1333, Japan once again plunged into a period of political instability. Towards the end of the Muromachi period (1336-1573) and time immediately following that, attempts were made by at least three local chieftains to unify Japan. Nobunaga Oda (1534-1582), Hideyoshi Toyotomi (1536-1598) and Ieyasu Tokugawa (1542-1616) were the makers of the Japanese history to usher in a lasting military government. They fought for military and political supremacy among them. Civil wars ravaged the country. Meanwhile the Portuguese traders reached Japan in the middle of the 16th century followed by Christian missionaries led by Francis Xavier (1506-1552), one of the leaders of the Jesuits. Christian missionary activities became aggressive and were centered around Kyushu. Japan received western technology and culture through them. Hideyoshi Toyotomi, however, ordered them to leave Japan, the policy implemented by him because of a growing anti-Christian sentiment in the ruling circles. The anti-Christian feeling gathered a momentum gradually among the ruling class and finally led to severe persecutions. The final blow was delivered when the Tokugawa shogunate decided to close the country to foreigners except a small locality in Kyushu where only the Dutch were allowed to trade.

After the Kamakura period, Buddhism continued to exercise its influences, but the political and social instability caused by a weak administrative control over divided ruling classes led to a subdued state of Buddhism on the whole. Culturally, however, Zen Buddhism almost single-handedly played a unique and dynamic role during the Muromachi period. Kan'ami (1333-84) and his son Zeami (1363-1443) were responsible for the creation and perfection of *Noh* drama, the stylized and frugal stage of which is reminiscent of Zen simplicity. Monochrome painting during this period also shows Zen influence. Sesshu (1420-1506), one of the most well known monochrome painters of the medieval Japan, was a Zen monk. His teacher, another great painter of the 15th century, was also a Zen monk.

Eisai, the founder of the Rinzai school of Zen Buddhism, is credited with the re-introduction of tea from China. It spread rapidly, and by the early 14th century, the custom of tea drinking seems to have spread everywhere in Japan. In the early phases of the history of tea ceremony, tea drinking parties were held as competitions to identify various types of tea. Great tea masters likes Ikkyu (1394-1481), his disciple Shuko (1422-1502) who developed the art of tea to Japanese taste, and Rikyu (1521-91) who further improved and gave a finishing touch to what is now called '*cha-no-yu*' (tea ceremony), were active during this period. It is said that the spirit of the art of tea consists of four things: 1. harmony (*wa*); 2. reverence (*kei*); 3. purity (*sei*); and 4. tranquility (*jaku*).

They are important elements to make the art of tea a success. Further, D.T.Suzuki writes: "What is common to Zen and the art of tea is the constant attempt both make as simplification."[5]

Buddhism in the Edo Period (1603-1867):

Buddhism received less state support during the Edo period. This is due to the fact that the Tokugawa shogunate encouraged the revival of Confucianism. Shinto was also given state support during this period. There was, however, a new development in Zen Buddhism. A new school of Zen, brought from China and propagated initially by the Chinese monks, was founded during the Edo period. The school is named 'Obaku' founded in 1661 and one of its characteristics is the recitation of the Amida Buddha's name as a form of meditation. This was very common in the Ming China where there was no sectarian divide between the followers of Pure Land and Ch'an practitioners.

Despite the Tokugawa government's indifference to Buddhism, Buddhism continued to exercise its influence upon many cultural activities and performing arts of Japan. As mentioned earlier, various forms of Zen art flourished during this period. In Haiku poetry, Basho (1644-1694) was responsible for the popularization of Haiku poetry taking much inspiration from Zen Buddhism during the Edo period. Tea ceremony continued to attract the aristocrats and samurai-warriors alike, so much so that it is even today a popular form of art practiced by many in Japan.

Almost all the important schools had been established before the dawn of the Edo period except the Obaku sect as seen above, and they continued to exercise their influences on the lives of many. This trend continued till the end of the Edo period, but new frontiers were about to appear in Japan and continued through the Meiji period (1868-1912) even up to date.

Buddhism in Modern Japan and the Rise of New Religions:

With the dawn of the Meiji period in 1868, the traditional Buddhism suffered a further setback owing to the government policy to disband Buddhism and encourage Shinto instead, the policy known as '*haibutsu-kishaku*' (disbanding of Buddhism). This was originally meant to separate Shinto from Buddhism but came to be misunderstood as a policy unfavorable to Buddhism. The traditional Buddhist schools becoming more dormant and defensive failed to fulfill the aspirations of the people, who, as a result, became increasingly frustrated. These prevailing circumstances necessitated the rise of a new religious movement that should cater to the needs of the people. The result was the formation and establishment of 'new religions' based on Shinto beliefs, Buddhism, or even Christianity. The new religions that arose specially in this period share common features. They tend to avoid clear divisions between lay followers and clergy; they gave no importance to rigid hierarchical structure existed in the old schools and encouraged equal opportunities to all in their religious practices; they are simply in their teachings. Another feature is that many of them were founded based on 'revelation' through Buddhist divinity or some spirits. Japanese society still continues to be receptive to such religious movements.

Of the 'newly established religions,' some have a long history spanning more than 100 years. The Tenrikyo whose principle philosophy is to bring about a 'joyous life' to all was founded in 1838 by Miki Nakayama who was chosen by God the Parent, who, it is said, is the original god responsible for creating human beings and the world in the beginning. The Konkokyo was founded by Bunjiro Kawate in 1859, and it believes in '*Tenchi Kane No Kami*' (Golden God of Heaven and Earth). This is a religious group derived from Shinto. The main teachings include that everything is in profound interrelation with each other and therefore suffering is caused by disregard to the relationship between all things; after death, all beings go back to God.

In the twentieth century, many new religions sprang up. The Rissho Kosei-kai (Society for the Perfection of the Nation and of the community of believers in accordance with Buddhist principles) was founded by Nikkyo Niwano in 1938 derived from the Nichiren school of Buddhism. Its main teachings centre on the two themes: the power and importance of devotion to the Lotus Sutra and ancestor rites. New religions having theoretical relations to the Nichiren school always emphasise the importance of devotion to the Lotus Sutra. The Soka Gakkai (Value-Creation Society) is another new religious group based on the teachings of Nichiren, the founder of the 13th century Buddhist school. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda may be considered as the founders of this movement in the mid twentieth century. It has grown rapidly and there are today many international branches called SGI (Soka Gakkai International founded with Daisaku Ikeda as its president in 1975) throughout the world. This group was associated with a political party called 'Komei-to' (Clean Government Party) which was started in 1964. Makuguchi, one of the founders, saw in Nichiren's teachings that the each individual's goal was happiness.

Japan had traditionally three major streams of thought that molded the character of the Japanese people. They are Shinto, Confucianism and Buddhism. Some attribute the Japanese traits to these three systems and say, rather in a simple fashion, that Shinto was for 'emotional', Confucianism for 'rational' and Buddhism for 'other worldly' or 'metaphysical' traits of the Japanese. Each religion, it is no doubt, played an important role.

Japan is a society with religious tolerance, and has the trait among its people that individual relations are more important than upholding universal principles. This trait is believed to have made many divisions possible to emerge within the same school of thought. Shingon, Jodo, Jodo Shin, Nichiren, and other schools of Buddhist thought have thus many subdivisions within the schools.

Buddhist Festivals:

Andreasen observes that one of the characteristics of religion in Japan, among others, is the importance of festivals (*matsuri*) as major religious celebrations.[6] The Buddhist festivals originated in ancient times are still observed in different parts of Japan today. This stems from the idea that Buddhism was viewed and believed by the ancient aristocrats and emperors as possessing magical power for the protection of the nation and healing of the sick. This led to the organization of rites and rituals on a regular basis. During the Heian period, several Buddhist temples in Kyoto were busy performing them for the temple patrons who were often the aristocrats.

Festivals of diverse nature started even before the dawn of the Nara period. Associated with the healing cult of *Yakushi Nyorai* (*Bhaisajyaguru*) was the *keka* (rite of repentance) which was held in honor of Yakushi to heal the sick, avert calamities, and purify the nation. The *sai-e* (vegetarian repast) was held in Japan in connection with the *keka* and *ango* (rainy retreat) to bring national prosperity. During the Heian period, practically every month of the year marked the conduct and performance of different festivals connected with Buddhism. They were held at leading temples in the capital Kyoto in order to satisfy the needs and expectations of the financial supporters of the temples who were usually aristocrats at the time. The *shushogatsu-e* (ceremony derived from the *keka* mixed with Shinto purification) was held during the first month of the year for purification and longevity. During the 4th month, *Kambutsu-e* was performed in commemoration of the Buddha's birthday. On the 8th of April (traditionally according to the lunar calendar) an infant Sakyamuni is bathed with sweet tea. This custom still continues at temples today. In the 7thmonth was performed an important festival for the dead called '*Urabon-e*'(*avalambana*). This originated during the Nara period. The event was observed officially at Court for the first time in 733 and was held annually thereafter.[7] This festival is of particular importance in the Japanese calendar. It is an annual event observed all over the country today and provides an opportunity for many to go back to their ancestral homes for the purpose of getting united with other relatives to remember and honour the ancestors. These are only a few examples of Buddhist festivals, and many more are still being performed in temples in Japan today.

The Present State of Buddhism:

The Japanese Constitution guarantees freedom of religion. The Article 20 of the Constitution of Japan promulgated on November 3, 1946 reads:

"Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all. No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority. No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious act, celebration, rite or practice. The State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity."[8]

Japan is a country where no restriction on religious activity is observed. Such a guarantee may be partly responsible for the diversity of new religions in Japan today.

Many Japanese today often consider themselves having no religion. Ordinary people are usually ignorant of the teachings of Buddhism or Shinto. Their claim, however, should not be mixed with the western idea of 'atheist' which is usually understood as a person who disbelieves the existence of God. Many Japanese participate in Shinto rites and rituals and probably have attended Buddhist funeral services at least once or twice in their lives. They do follow such religious activities, because it is merely customary. This kind of ambiguity or no demarcation between what one believes in and what the society requires him to follow as a custom is the state of religiosity prevalent among the Japanese today. The Japanese religiosity may be said to have partly derived from the religious significance of the family and ancestors, which was the influence of Confucianism with its filial piety. This also accounts for the significance the Japanese attach to religious festivals such as '*o-bon*' (festival for the dead). Even the time-duration for any dead person to go through before he is to be reborn such as the 7th day each of the First Week, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth , and seventh Week (49th day), then 100th day, and 1st death anniversary, were all borrowed from Chinese religious practices, and are directly connected with the practice of ancestor-worship.

The statistics of believers of different religions in Japan as of 31/12/2000 according to the 'Agency for

Cultural Affairs' are as follows:

Shinto	107,952,589 (50.1%)
Buddhism	95,420,178 (44.3%)
Christianity	1,771,651 (0.8%)
Other religions	10, 221,454 (4.7%)
The total number	215,365,872 .[9]

Interestingly, the total exceeds the population of Japan which is estimated at around 127 millions.[10] This suggests that many Japanese follow two and sometimes even three religions simultaneously. Buddhism and Shinto function in the Japanese society at two different levels: the former is more spiritual and the latter is materialistic. These two do not interfere with each other in real society, which could explain why people do not question the validity of having more than one religion at the same time. Perhaps, Japanese society allows such flexible religious attitude, the attitude traditional ascribable to 'religious tolerance' of Japanese Buddhism and religion.

When the society becomes more complex, expectations from religion also become more diverse. Modern religions have to meet such changing circumstances and needs of the people. Buddhism is no exception. It is precisely because of such a societal landscape, new religions have emerged. They are basically a movement of lay followers. It appears, however, that the traditional Buddhist schools have sat on their tradition without trying to adapt themselves to the modern society. If the traditional Buddhist schools are to survive and answer the expectations and needs of the people, the conservative monkish attitude must be changed so as to reach out to the people, listen to them and work for them. Moreover, Buddhist schools are too divided. Consensus is difficult to reach among them. If they are to become more dynamic and caring, this situation must also be resolved. The following are the statistics of the traditional Buddhist schools together with their branches in Japan:[11]

Sect	No. of temples.	No. of followers.	Total No. of main and sub sects.
Tendai	4,446	3,150,000	19
Shingon	12,517	12,650, 000	57
Jodo	8,152	6,470,000	5
Jodo Shin	20,927	12,730,000	20
Nichiren	6,937	17,220,000	44
Rinzai Zen	5,726	810,000	15
Soto Zen	14,687	1,560,000	1
Total		54,590,000	161

The interest in Buddhism is increasing among the Japanese people in recent years. Many popular books on Buddhism are being written and published.

Notes

1 Varley, *Paul* H. *Japanese Culture*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1984, p. 8.

2 Daigan & Alicia Matsunaga. *Foundation of Japanese Buddhism*, Vol. I: Los Angeles-Tokyo: Buddhist Book International, 1992, pp. 219 f.

3 Ibid., p. 221.

4 Dumoulin, Heinrich, S.J. *A History of Zen Buddhism*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2000, p. 67.

5 Suzuki, D.T. *Zen and Japanese Culture*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1988, p. 271.

6 Reader, Ian with Andreasen, Esben and Stefánsson. *Japanese Religions: Past and Present*. Kent: Japan Library, 1993, p.41.

7 Matsunaga, Daigan & Alicia. *Foundation of Japanese Buddhism*, Vol. I. Los Angeles-Tokyo: Buddhist Books International, 1992, p. 232.

8 *The Asahi Shimbun Japan Almanac* 2003. Tokyo: The Asahi Shimbun Company, 2002, pp. 277-8

9 *Ibid.*, p. 242.

10 *Ibid.*, 30

11 http://homepage3.nifty.com/54321/gendainihonbukkyo.html retrieved on 08/02/2011.

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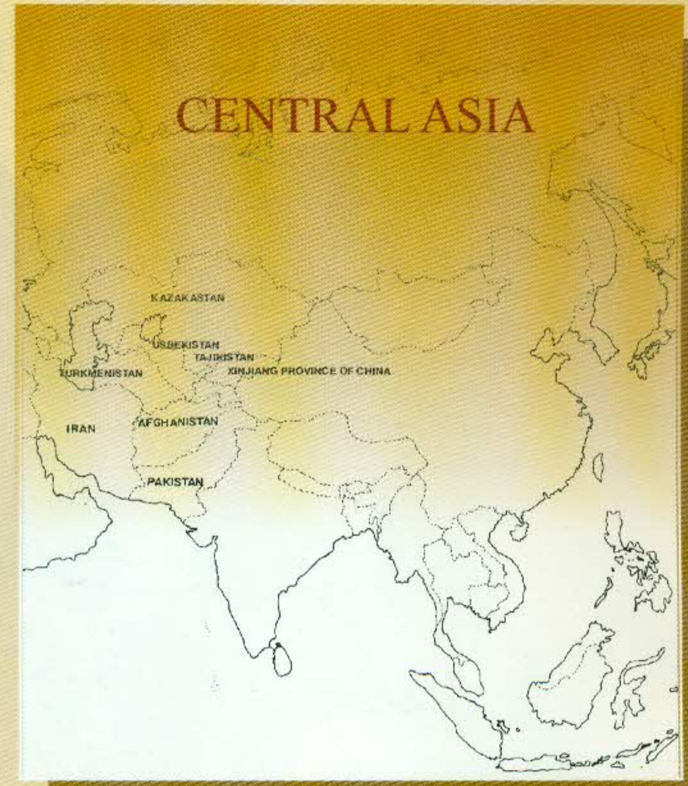
CENTRAL ASIA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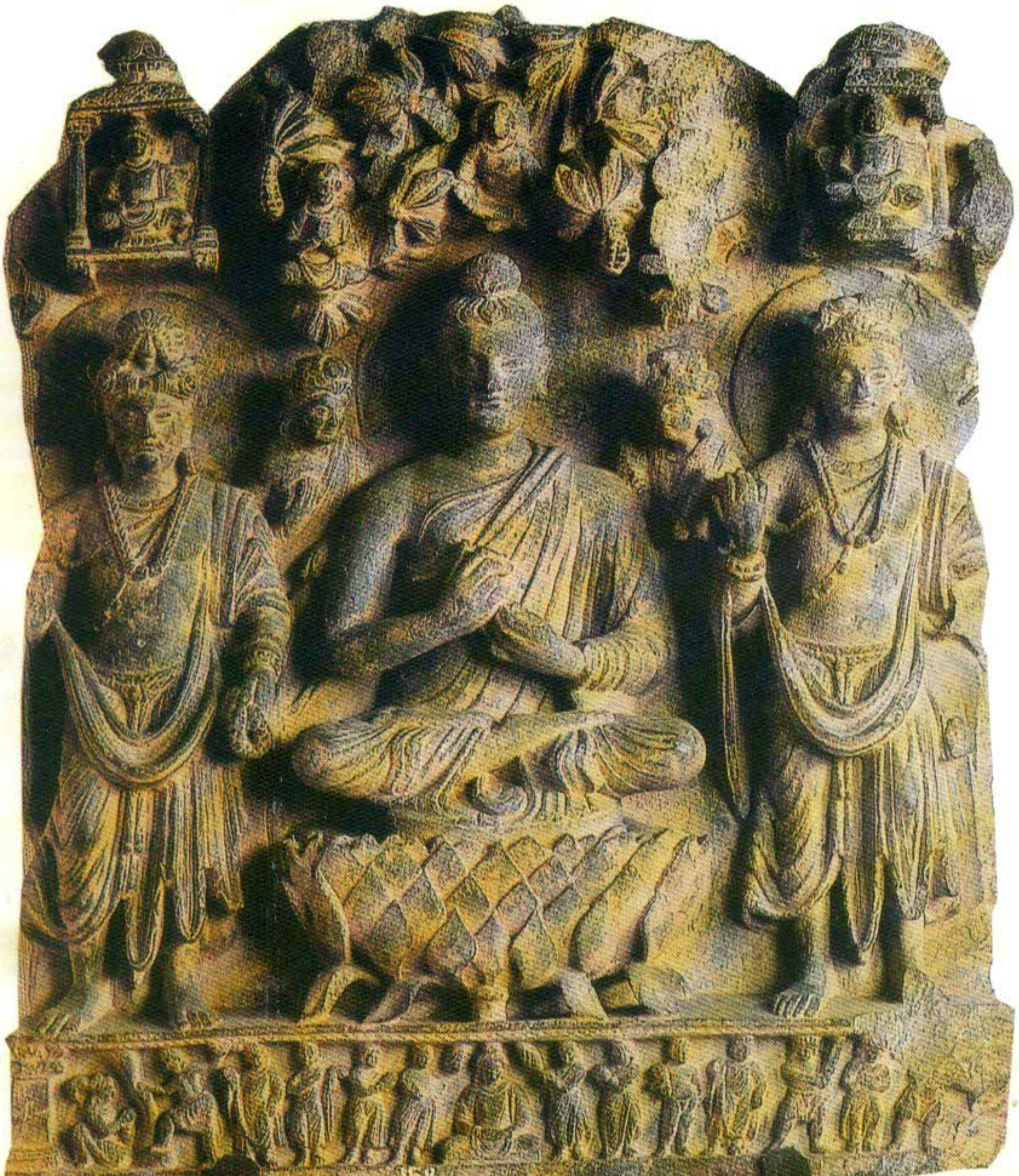


Buddha Image on a Lotus

ESSAY 22

Buddhism in Central Asia

Bindu Urugodawatte

Introduction

Background

"*Unless they coincide with clearly defined physical boundaries – as is the case, for instance, with Australia – the borders of a cultural area can rarely be established with ease and accuracy.*"[1] This is indeed true in the case of Central Asia, which is an assimilation of many distinctive types of cultures, the most important being Greco-Bactrian, Indian, Persian, Chinese and the nomadic cultures of the Steppes. Central Asia, as a distinctive region, was first introduced by the German Geographer Alexander von Humboldt in 1843. However, since its introduction, the borders of Central Asia have been subject to multiple definitions and multiple names. Inner Asia, Turkestan, Middle Asia, Transoxiana, Soviet Central Asia, and Eastern Turkestan are a few of the names used to identify this region and the political borders attributed to each definition are also different.

Humboldt's definition of Central Asia was the area between the plateau of Ustyurt (located between the Aral Sea and the Caspian Sea in modern Uzbekistan & Kazakhstan) in the west and the Greater Khingan mountains (located in the modern Inner Mongolia Province of the People's Republic of China) in the East, which included Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kirghizstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolian Autonomous Regions of China[2].

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines Central Asia as the "*central region of Asia, extending from the Caspian Sea in the west to the border of western China in the east. It is bounded on the north by Russia and on the south by Iran, Afghanistan, and China. The region consists of the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan*".[3] The *History of Civilizations in Central Asia*, published by UNESCO, defines Central Asia as the region between Iran to Mongolia, including Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Chinese province of Xinjiang and Mongolia.[4] This definition is based on the historical, cultural, social, economic and other traits which interlinked these countries for centuries. S. Frederick Starr uses the term "Greater Central Asia" to describe the larger cultural zone including the five former Soviet Republics (i.e: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan) and Afghanistan, Pakistan, Khorasan Province of Iran, Mongolia and parts of the Russian Steppes.[5]

Turkestan was commonly used to indicate the region of Central Asia in the pre-modern era, demonstrating that it was the area inhabited by Turkic people even though there were others of non-Turkic origin living in the area. The northern boundary of Turkestan was Siberia, Tibet, India, Afghanistan and Iran to the south, the Gobi Desert to the east and the Caspian Sea to the West.[6] In modern political terms this includes Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Mongolia and the Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Regions of China. Transoxiana is another term used to describe the area east of the Amu Darya River (Oxus River) and west of Syr Darya River (Jaxartes River) in present day Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan.[7]

Owen Lattimore in his epic work *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, defines Inner Asia as "*Between the Pacific Ocean and the Pamirs, and from the Pamirs curving southward into the bleak highlands that divide China from India, lie the lands of Manchuria, Mongolia, Chinese Turkestan and Tibet. These are the Inner Asian barrier land*".[8] However, Dennis Sinor's definition of Inner Asia in the *Cambridge History of Inner Asia* includes northern and north-western provinces of China, Russia, Mongolia, North Korea, and up to Armenia and Georgia in the west.

It is indeed difficult to determine the geographical, cultural, religious or social boundaries of Central Asia and, as indicated above, there are multiple explanations and definitions. The UNESCO definition is one of the more comprehensive, being based on historical, cultural, religious, social, economic and other common traits shared in this region.

Discovery of Central Asia

European interest in Central Asia was initially between the two great empires of Russia and Great Britain during the Nineteenth century CE when both countries were vying for supremacy of the region. This interest led Russia and Great Britain to gather information about the region during the latter half of the nineteenth century, which included archaeological ruins as well as manuscripts and artifacts . These early manuscripts subsequently sparked the interest of scholars, resulting in expeditions during the early Twentieth century to Central Asia in search of ancient artifacts and manuscripts of the forgotten civilizations of Central Asia. The most prominent explorers of this era included the Hungarian born Sir Marc Aurel Stein, who carried out three expeditions to Central Asia between 1900 and 1916 funded by the British Colonial Government of India, and a 4th expedition funded by the Fogg Museum and the Yenching Institute of Harvard University. Stein's expedition sparked worldwide interest and was quickly followed by Paul Pelliot of France, Albert Grünwedel and Albert von Le Coq of Germany, Count Otani Kozui of Japan and Sergei Fedorovich Oldenburg of Russia. Due to the ad hoc acquisition of Central Asian manuscripts and artefacts, they have been dispersed throughout the world, making it complicated to understand the region.[9] One of the best resources for the study of Buddhism in Central Asia was discovered at the Dunhuang Mogao grottoes in the Gansu Province of China. In 1900, the Taoist monk who was the caretaker of the grottoes, discovered a hidden cave - which came to be known as Cave 17 or the Library Cave - filled with documents, books, paper paintings, silk paintings, and embroidery, dating from the fourth century CE to the eleventh century CE. The manuscripts and objects of Cave 17 are also scattered in different institutions around the world.

Languages in Central Asia

The study of Buddhism in Central Asia is further complicated by the multiple languages and scripts used in Central Asia, some of which vanished centuries ago. The manuscripts of Central Asia provide evidence of these extinct languages and scripts. The languages and scripts include Phags-pa, Arabic, Avestan, Bactrian, Brahmi, Chinese, Gāndhāri, Gupta, Judaeo-Persian, Kharōsthi, Khōtanese, Kitan, Kitan Linear Script, Kok Turkic, Manichaean Middle Persian, Mongolian, Nāgari, New Persian, Old Turkic, Parthian, Pehlevi, Sanskrit, Siddham, Sogdian, Syriac, Tangut, Tibetan, Tocharian, Tumshuqese, Turkic and Uighur.[10]

The lost languages and scripts stimulated a great interest among academics as well as private collectors, creating a market for objects from Central Asia, which resulted in the indiscriminate destruction of archaeological sites to obtain manuscripts and objects during the early part of the Twentieth Cntury. An illicit trade in cultural property declined when museums desisted from purchasing such items, but since the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan, the looting of objects and manuscripts increased rapidly, damaging the cultural artefacts due to indiscriminate digging, obliterating a multitude of archaeological information.

At present, research on Central Asia is published in many different languages, mainly in Russian with regard to the former Soviet Union Republics, in Chinese with regard to the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China, and in English, French, German, and Italian. Thus, linguistically too, the study of Buddhism in Central Asia is complicated.

Religions in Central Asia

Central Asia is an area enriched with multiple cultures, religions, societies, and ethnicities with both nomadic and sedentary way of life being practiced. The predominant religion in Central Asia today is Islam; however, Buddhism is the main religion in Mongolia. During the pre-Islamic era, there were multiple religions practiced in Central Asia including Buddhism, Shamanism, Manichaeism, Nestorian Christianity, and Zoroastrianism as indicated by the art and archaeology , and historical manuscripts of Central Asia. During the pre-Islamic era in Central Asia, the dominant religion was Buddhism as indicated by the monasteries and other Buddhist ruins dotting the landscape of Central Asia. Nevertheless, today, it is not a living religion except in Mongolia.

This essay will concentrate on the areas where Buddhism is no longer a practiced religion, i.e. Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Xinjiang Autonomous Province of China.

Historical Sources of Buddhism in Central Asia

The best source for studying the past is contemporary original documents. However, such documents of great antiquity are indeed rare. Palm leaf manuscripts were used extensively in South Asia;, however, due to the hot and humid climate prevailing in this region, such manuscripts invariably decayed. The practice of copying the decaying manuscripts on fresh palm leaves continued in Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka and in other South-East Asian countries where the Theravada tradition prevailed. Nevertheless, this constant copying inadvertently resulted in minor deviations and changes. The Chinese, having invented paper and printing, became meticulous record keepers. In China, the books were reprinted numerous times, and as in the case of palm leaf manuscripts, the reprints sometimes had minor variations.

Central Asia, especially in the Tarim Basin in the modern Xinjiang Province of China and other areas where the climate was arid, many contemporary documents on paper, palm leaf or birch bark and other organic material were preserved for many centuries. These documents were discovered in various caches by the early European explorers such as Aurel Stein and Paul Pelliot. These documents, in many different languages and scripts, provide us with in-depth information on contemporary religious grants, economy, law, society, and culture. These documents have become a gold mine for researchers and provide hitherto unknown information about Central Asia.

Sri Lankan and Indian Sources

According to the Sri Lankan historical chronicle the *Mahāwamsa*, Buddhism was first introduced to the Gāndhāra region (modern Afghanistan, Pakistan and parts of Northern India) during the third century BCE. The Ven. Majjhantika was sent to Kāsmira and Gāndhāra under the patronage of King Asōka (reign 273-232 BCE) after the conclusion of the Third Buddhist Council. The *Mahāwamsa* further records that Majjhantika Thera performed miracles and saved people from hail and floods caused by the Nāga king of Gāndhāra. Subsequently, the Nāga king and his followers were converted to Buddhism.[11] The Greek and Aramaic inscription of King Asōka discovered in Kandahar in modern Afghanistan further substantiates the fact that Buddhism was introduced to this region during the 3rd C BCE. The Kandahar inscription clearly states: "*After a full ten years, King Piodasse had the text of Dhamma published to men and from this moment, he made men merciful and everything prosperous all over the earth.*"[12] The Kandahar inscription is not the only one of King Asoka's which alludes to the dissemination of Buddhism to the Gāndhāra region in Central Asia. The Rock Edict 5 of King Asōka states: "*In the past there were no Dhamma Mahāmatras (?) but such officers were appointed by me thirteen years after my coronation. Now they work among all religions for the establishment of Dhamma, for the promotion of Dhamma, and for the welfare and happiness of all who are devoted to Dhamma. They work among the Greeks, the Kambōjas, the Gāndhāras, the Rastrikas, the Pitinikas and other peoples on the western borders.*"[13] These sources indicate that at least by the 3rd C BCE, if not before, Buddhism was known in the Gāndhāra region of Central Asia.[14]

Chinese Sources

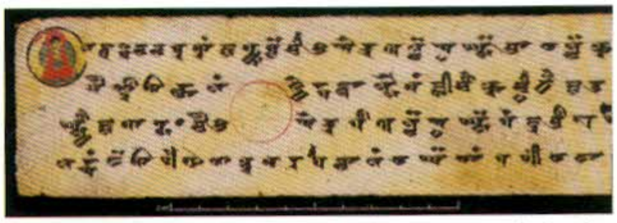
The introduction of Buddhism to China invariably led to closer contacts with the Central Asian kingdoms, especially with regard to obtaining and translating Buddhist texts. Such texts from India and Central Asia were translated into Chinese, initially by foreign monks from Central Asia. An Shigao from Parthia (modern north-eastern Iran and a part of Turkmenistan) was one of the earliest and most famous translators of Buddhist texts into Chinese. An Shigao arrived in the city of Luoyang in 148 CE and established the most important centre for the translation of Buddhist texts to Chinese. An Xuan, also from the kingdom of Parthia, Zhi Loujiachan from Scythia (modern Iran), Kang Mengxiang and Kang Ju from Sogdiana (part of modern Uzbekistan), were among the foreign monks from Central Asia who were prominent translators of Buddhist texts during the second century CE. The tradition of Central Asian monks translating Buddhist texts to Chinese continued with Fo Tuteng from Central Asia becoming prominent around 310 CE and Kumarajiva (344–413 CE) from Qiusi kingdom (modern city of Kuche in Xinjiang Province in China) were among the key translators.[15] These records of prominent Central Asian monks provide an important link in the study of Buddhism in Central Asia, especially about Buddhism in modern Iran where archaeological evidence for the existence of Buddhism has thus far not been discovered. Since the time of the Western Han Dynasty (206 BCE – 8 CE), (also known as the Former Han Dynasty), the Chinese Imperial Court kept meticulous records, not only about the day to day information of the court but also about the various nations they came into contact with. Since the Western Han Dynasty, the Chinese Historical Chronicles incorporated a section called "Western Region", which provides detailed descriptions of kingdoms beyond the Great Wall of China. It is in this "Western Region" section that we can find information about Central Asia. The Emperor Wu Di (reign 140-87 BCE) sent a mission to Central Asia led by Court Official Zhang Qian, which led to the opening of communication, trade and diplomatic relations between China and the Central Asian Kingdoms. The historical chronicle of the Eastern Han Dynasty (8–220 CE), also known as the Later Han Dynasty, in the chapter on "Western Regions" ("Xi Yu Juan"), Section 15, states that the Buddhist way of life was practiced in North Western India.[16] Buddhism is mentioned in the Western Regions Chapter mainly in the record of India. However, the names of rulers, population, trade commodities and other details of the Central Asian kingdoms are recorded.

Other than the historical chronicles of China, the records of the Buddhist monks who travelled to India in search of Buddhist texts also provide a glimpse of Buddhism in Central Asia. The Buddhist monk Fa Xian who travelled to India through Central Asia, left a comprehensive record of Buddhism of the region in his

A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms. Fa Xian refers to the kingdom of Shen-shen (possibly the city of Loulan in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China) thus: "*After travelling for seventeen days . . . reached the kingdom of Shen-shen, a country rugged and hilly, with a thin and barren soil. The king professed (our) Law,*[17] *and there might be in the country more than four thousand monks, who were all students of Hīnayāna. The common people of this and other kingdoms (in that region), as well as the Shamans, all practice the rules of India, only that the latter do so more exactly, and the former more loosely.*"[18] Fa Xian further records that the kingdoms of Yu Tian (Khōtan – Hetian in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China), Tsze-hoh[19] (maybe Yarkand), were followers of Mahāyāna and Woo-e (location not identified) and Shen-shen (modern Loulan) followed the Theravāda tradition.[20] Xuanzang, the famous Tang Dynasty monk, left the Capital city of Chang'an (the modern city of Xi'an) in 627 CE to travel to India and returned to Chang'an in 643 CE. He recorded many details of the Central Asian Kingdoms he travelled through, specially the Buddhist Kingdoms. Xuanzang described the kingdom of Qiusi (the modern city of Kuche in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China) thus: "*There are about one hundred convents (Saṅghārāmas) in this country, with five thousand and more disciples. These belong to the Little Vehicle of the school of the Sarvastivādas. Their doctrine (teaching of Sūtras) and their rules of discipline (principles of the Vinaya) are like those of India.*"[21] Xuanzang also visited Gaochang (Turfan in the modern Xinjiang Province of China), Samarkand (in modern Uzbekistan), Fergana Valley (located in Uzbekistan, which extends to modern Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), Bokhara (in modern Uzbekistan), Bamiyan (in modern Afghanistan), and Kashgar and Khōtan (in modern Xinjiang province of China), and left detailed descriptions about these kingdoms in Central Asia.[22]

Kharosthi Documents from Central Asia

The Kharōsthi documents with provenance were primarily discovered by Aurel Stein at the site of Niya in the Xinjiang Province of China, but many other documents were discovered without provenance due to illicit trade. The Niya manuscripts have been dated to circa 235–325 CE and the language used in these documents is a North Indian version of Prakrit related to Gāndhāri.[23] The Niya documents include references to Buddhism and portray the contemporary beliefs of the ordinary people. A letter from Niya about a dispute between two parties provides the names of two monks "Bamgusena and Pacgoyae" and the death of a person: "*I have heard the bad news that Anasena is dead. As a result of that news, we have experienced the shafts of great sorrow and grief in our hearts. That is something beyond even the powers of a Buddha, or a Pratyekabuddha, or an Arhant or a Universal Monarch. All come to the same end. Care must be exercised how we go, virtuous acts performed and purity maintained.*"[24] Another document reveals a Buddhist ritual and the virtues brought by practicing it. These documents also prove that Buddhist monks sometimes acted as witnesses and scribes to legal documents.[25] The other Kharōsthi manuscripts discovered include a text of the Dhamrmapada written in the Gāndhāri language found near Khōtan in the Xinjiang Province of China, and a collection of Kharōsthi manuscripts in Gāndhāri believed to have been part of a monastic collection or a library of the Dharmaguptaka school of Buddhism dating to the early first century CE and consisting of Buddhist poetic compositions of the Dharmmapada, Anavatapta-gātha, Khadgavisana Gātha (Rhinoceros Horn Sutra), Avadana texts, etc.[26] These documents provide contemporary accounts of the lives of Buddhist devotees.



Khotanese Buddhist Manuscript written in Brahmi script, now at the British Library. © IOL Khot 60/1, International Dunhuang Project, British Library Board 2011.

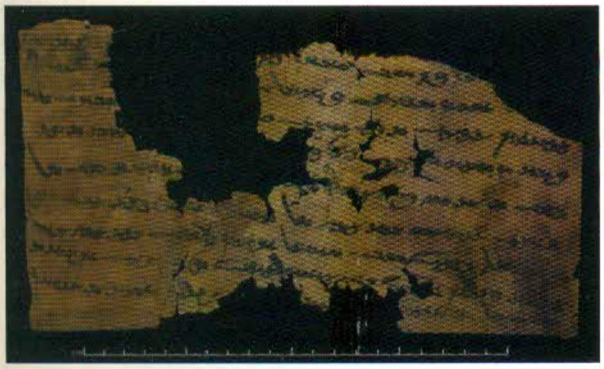
Brāhmi Script documents from Central Asia

Brāhmi script was used in Central Asia by different communities to record their language. Documents in Sanskrit, Khātanese and Tocharian were mainly written using Brahmi script. Brāhmi documents were discovered at the Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes Cave 17 (Gansu Province, China), Kizil Grottoes, Tumshuk, Khadalik, Mazar Tagh, Domoko, Yarkhoto, and Endere in the Xinjiang Province of China. There is an interesting array of manuscripts in Khōtanese, the most fascinating being the "Book of Zambasta", a Buddhist poem written at the request of an official called Zambasta, is the longest indigenous literary composition in Khōtanese that has survived to the modern era.[27] These texts include the Ratnakūta Sūtra, Sanghata Sūtra and Suvarnabhasottama Sūtra.

Among the languages using the Brāhmi script are the two extinct Indo-European languages known as Tocharian A and Tocharian B. Tocharian A was widely used in the Turfan area of the Xinjiang Province of China and Tocharian B was used in the modern Kuche area and sometimes called Kuchean. Tocharian, as with Khōtanese, has been extinct for centuries and is only known to us through the texts which have been discovered. The Tocharian texts were mostly translations of Buddhist texts but, there were also monastic correspondences and accounts, commercial documents, caravan permits, etc. One of the longest manuscripts in Tocharian A is the *Maitreyasamiti-Nātaka* (a Buddhist text) discovered near Yanqi in the Xinjiang Province of China in 1974.[28] However, fragments of the same text in Tocharian A were also discovered by Albert Grunwedel and Albert Von Le Coq during their foray into the Xinjiang Province of China in early Twentieth century.

Sogdian documents of Central Asia

Sogdian, an extinct Indo-Iranian language, was used in the Kingdom of Sogdiana, which comprised the modern cities of Samarkand and Bukhara of Uzbekistan and the cities of Panjakent and Fergana of Tajikistan,. Sogdian Buddhist texts were mainly discovered at the Dunhuang Mogao Cave 17 in the Gansu Province of China and the Turfan area in the Xinjiang Province of China, probably due to the fact that there were Sogdian colonies in Dunhuang as well as in the modern Xinjiang Province of China.[29] Sogdian Buddhist texts were also found in Khōtan, Kuche, and Shorchuk in the Xinjiang Province.



A Sogdian paper manuscript from Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes now at the British Library. © Or.8212/82, International Dunhuang Project, British Library Board 2011.

The Buddhist texts include Jataka stories such as "Vessantara Jataka", sūtras such as Vajracchedikaprajnāpāramitā sūtra, Mahāparinirvāna sūtra, Vimalakirtinirdésa sūtra, Avatamsaka sutra, Lankavatāra sutra, and Tantric and Dhārani texts such as Padmachintamani sutra, Nilakanthadhārani. These Sogdian Buddhist texts indicate the role played by the Sogdians in promoting Buddhism in Central Asia as merchants, translators and in the role of Sogdian colonies outside Sogdiana.[30]

The Role of Central Asia in the Dissemination of Buddhism

Historical sources indicate that the dissemination of Buddhism outside India took place in the Third century BCE during the reign of Emperor Asōka (273-232 BCE). With the introduction of Buddhism to Gāndhāra (modern Afghanistan, Pakistan, and parts of Northern India), Central Asia became a catalyst in spreading Buddhism to other parts of Central Asia and East Asia. With the establishment of the Kushan Empire (1st to 3rd Century CE[31]), with its domain including modern Afghanistan, Pakistan, Samarkand, Bukhara of Uzbekistan, Dushanabe of Tajikistan and extending to India's Narmada river in the South,[32] Buddhist philosophy started expanding into other areas of Central Asia due to the political stability which made travel and trade more convenient within the region. Buddhism was one of the religions practiced in the Kushan Empire and it came to prominence under the rule of Kanishka II (2nd Cntury CE[33]). The biggest contribution to Buddhism by Kanishka II was the convening of the Fourth Buddhist Council in Kashmir and the compilation of the texts of the Mahāsānghika and Sarvastivāda Schools in Sanskrit. The discovery of Sanskrit Buddhist texts in Central Asia as well as at Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes Cave 17, confirms the use of Sanskrit as the literary language of Buddhism in Central Asia as well as in the transmission of Buddhism to East Asia. Along with Buddhism, Brāhmi and Kharōsthi scripts were adopted by the Central Asian kingdoms to record their own languages which didn't have scripts of their own. The introduction of Buddhism changed the whole cultural, religious and social landscape of Central Asia, introducing writing and changing the art and architecture of the area.[34]

The numerous artefacts discovered in Central Asia includes reliquaries and pots for instance with Buddhist inscriptions, the ceramics from Termez in Tajikistan with Kharosthi and Brahmi script, dedicatory inscriptions on reliquaries, and pottery with a Kharosthi Buddhist dedicatory inscription from Balkh in Tajikistan, etc.[35] Inscriptions on artefacts, especially those on earthenware donated to the Buddhist clergy, indicate that Buddhism was a part of the daily life of the community and not reserved to the monasteries only.

During the First Millennium CE, Central Asia played a crucial role in the dissemination of Buddhism. The Tang Dynasty (Seventh Century CE) Buddhist records of China state that a Second Century BCE Chinese court official who travelled to Central Asia brought back information about Buddhism to China.[36] The biography of Prince Ying of the Chu kingdom mentions a vegetarian feast given to the Buddhist monks and layman in 68 CE, which is the earliest contemporary reference to Buddhism and a Buddhist community in China.[37] Regardless of how or when Buddhism was introduced to China, Buddhism in China was largely influenced by Central Asia, especially as it was the Central Asian Buddhist monks who translated the Buddhist canon to Chinese and also introduced many Buddhist texts to China.

Along with Buddhist philosophy, Buddhist art and architecture were also developed in Central Asia, influenced by the Buddhist art of India. Statues and paintings of Buddha, Bōdhisattva and the Arahants, Stupas, and other religious monuments and objects, infiltrated Central Asia and changed the Central Asian cultural and social landscape forever. Even though Buddhism disappeared from Central Asia many centuries ago the remaining art and architecture are a direct testimony to the prominence of Buddhism in Central Asia.

Archaeological Evidence for Buddhism in Central Asia

Buddhist tradition encourages donations to monasteries as a crucial method of gaining merit (karma) for the lay followers of the religion. Since the time of the Buddha, lay patrons use this method to gain merit by constructing temples and funding Buddhist art and manuscripts to help them in their path to Nirvāna. Thus, Buddhist art reminds, supports and reinforces the eternal truths of the religion, and its development and style remain integral to the history of the religion and the regional cultures it encountered. Buddhist art was used as an integral part of Buddhist instruction as well as bringing merit, which encouraged the patrons to spend lavishly on monuments and art.

Early Buddhist art (prior to the First Century CE) did not include the image of the Buddha, but was represented by aniconic symbols such as the wheel of Dharma (Dharmacackra), an empty seat, the Bōdhi tree, the stūpa, and a footprint, are represented in the early sculpture of Sanchi and Bharut in India. (The footprint representing Buddha is found in abundance in Sri Lanka.) There are two major theories on the place of origin of the Buddha image, a source of debate for over a century:

1 The image of Buddha originated in the Gāndhāra region of Central Asia, influenced by the images of Greco-Bactrian deities.
2 The image of Buddha originated in India in Mathura, a development based on the natural requirement of the lay patrons to have a visual representation of the Buddha[38].

It is also possible that two distinctive types of Buddha images developed simultaneously in two areas. Regardless of the origin of the Buddha image, the Gāndhara region is prolific with Buddha statues, Bōdhisattva statues, and other religious objects, which enriched the Central Asian landscape and influenced the Buddhist art of China and other East Asian countries. The art and architecture represent the extent Buddhism was embraced by the Central Asian communities, and the active role played by the community.

Buddhism disappeared from Central Asia many centuries ago, leaving only the deserted monasteries and temples as reminder of a religion which flourished in the region for over a millennium. Buddhism, along with its rituals, cultural and social practices was gradually replaced by Islam during the Second Millennium CE. However, despite Islamic restrictions on idolatry worship, many of the Buddhist temples have survived as ruins despite the passage of time and vandalism. Buddhist sites such as the caves at Bamiyan in Afghanistan and Kizil in the Xinjiang Province of China were used by the locals for various purposes such as temporary shelters and for storage. As Islam started to take root in Central Asia, the patronage of locals turned to Islam and many of the monasteries lacked the funds to maintain their temples as demonstrated by the lack of new construction in the Second Millennium CE despite Buddhism surviving in small communities.

Buddhism in Iran

It is generally believed that Buddhism was prolific only in South, Southeast and East Asia and did not expand into West Asia (modern Iran). However, there is evidence to indicate that Buddhism was known and practiced as a religion in Iran despite the very meagre evidence. Buddhism was practiced among Iranian-speaking people in Central Asia, and Khotanese and Tocharian-speaking people of Xinjiang Province of China, and in ancient Sogdiana.[39] These Iranian-speaking communities settled in Eastern Central Asia were ardent patrons of Buddhism.

The earliest evidence about the possibility of Buddhism spreading west to modern Iran is found in the Rock Edict XIII of Asōka (reign 273 - 232 BCE), which states: "*Now it is conquest by Dhamma that Beloved-of-the-Gods considers to be the best conquest. And it (conquest by Dhamma) has been won here, on the borders, even six hundred Yojanas away, where the Greek king Antiochos rules, beyond there where the four kings named Ptolemy, Antigonos, Magas and Alexander rule, likewise in the south among the Cholas, the Pandyas, and as far as Tamraparni.[40] Here in the king's domain among the Greeks, the Kambojas, the*

Nabhakas, the Nabhapamkits, the Bhojas, the Pitinikas, the Andhras and the Palidas, everywhere people are following Beloved-of-the-Gods' instructions in Dhamma"[41]. This indicates that Asoka sent Buddhist missions to modern Syria, Egypt and even as far as Macedonia; however, whether the missions ever reached that far is debatable. Nevertheless, at least one Buddhist mission penetrated the area of modern Iran en route to further West and had shared at least some of the Buddhist philosophy with local communities they encountered.

The earliest confirmation that Buddhism was practiced in modern Iran is from the time of King Shapur I (241–271 CE) of the Sasanian Empire. King Shapur's Zorastrian high priest, Kirdir (Kartir), had an inscription carved at Naqsh-e-Rajab stating: "*And Jews and Buddhists and Hindus and Nazarenes and Christians and Baptists and Manichaeans were smitten in the empire, and idols were destroyed and the abodes of the demons disrupted and made into thrones and seats of the gods*." [42] This inscription of Kerdir definitely indicates that there were Buddhist idols and monasteries in Iran, prior to the persecution of Buddhism, which signifies that the lack of evidence for Buddhism in Iran is partly due to this destruction of Buddhist temples by the Kirdir.

Alberuni (973–1048 CE), the Persian historian records: "*In former times, Khorasan,*[43] *Persia,*[44] *Iraq, Mosul,*[45] *and the country to the frontier of Syria, was Buddhistic, but then Zarathustra went forth from Azarbaijan and preached Magism in Balkh*[46] *(Baktra)*." [47] This statement by Alberuni confirms that Buddhism was prevalent in modern Iran during the early part of the First Millennium CE but was eradicated from Iran during the time of King Shapur as clearly stated in the inscription of Kirdir.

It has been suggested that the rock-cut cave complex at Chehelkhaneh and Haidari in the Booshehr Province in Iran may have been created as Buddhist rock-cut temples similar to Ajanta and Ellora in India, and Kizil and Bezeklick in Xijiang Province of Chinese Central Asia. The shapes, layout and arrangement of the rooms, and the large elliptical niches where a statue of Buddha was placed, are comparable to those found in Buddhist grottoes in Central Asia. The grottoes at Haidari contain a circumambulatory in its main chamber like the rock-cut caves in India and Central Asia. The Rasatkhaneh and Varjuvi tock-cut caves near Maragheh in Northern Iran also have many similarities to Buddhist grottoes. These caves too have been entirely excavated from rock and have circumambulatory passages, a few fragments of frescoes, as well as sharing many architectural details with Buddhist grottoes.[48]

The earliest rock-cut caves have always been associated with Buddhism, subsequently rock-cut cave temples were created by the patrons of Jain and Hindu communities in India such as the Udayagiri cave temples in Orissa and the Elephanta Hindu cave temple near Bombay.[49] The Niasar Caves in Isfahan Province of Iran have been identified as a fire temple of the Mithra religion, excavated out of natural rock.[50] Even though the grottoes of Chehelkhaneh, Haidari, Rasatkhaneh and Varjuvi caves share many architectural details with Buddhist grottoes, there are no Buddha statues or any other statues or objects to definitely confirm that these were Buddhist caves. It is possible that these caves were created by Buddhist patrons but were subsequently destroyed when the religion was abolished by Kirdir, the Zorastrian high priest. Nevertheless, these facts are enough to confirm that Buddhism was known in modern Iran.

Buddhism in Turkmenistan

Throughout history, the modern region known as Turkmenistan was controlled by different kingdoms and empires. The ancient city of Merv located near the modern city of Mary was also an important and prosperous trading city on the Silk Route. Merv, an oasis-city which was visited by merchants, attracted many Buddhists. This is confirmed by the stūpas, Buddhist manuscripts and other Buddhist artefacts found in and around Merv, Bairam-Ali, and Ashkabad. At Gyaur Kala in the ancient city of Merv a Buddhist stūpa and monastery, dating to the Fourth or Fifth Century, was discovered in the South East corner.[51] In addition, a head of the Buddha made of clay was also discovered at Gyaur Kala.[52] At the Bairam-Ali stūpa, vessels with birch-bark Sanskrit manuscripts written in Brāhmi script about the first female disciples of Buddha were transcribed.[53] Ruins of two stūpas and Buddhist caves have been identified near modern Ashkabat.[54] Merv was invaded by the armies of Genghis Khan between 1219 to 1224 CE and the city was devastated.[55] The influence of Buddhism was already declining in Merv by the time of the Mongolian destruction, which also destroyed many of the remaining Buddhist monuments and art. However, further research and archaeological excavations are necessary to clearly identify the extent to which Buddhism was practiced in modern Turkmenistan.

Buddhism in Pakistan

As in many other Central Asian countries, Buddhism once flourished in Pakistan. The Peshawar valley of Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province is considered to be the heart of Gāndhāra proper while Taxila, Gilgit, and the Swat Valley in Pakistan, and Buddhist sites in Afghanistan, are considered to be located in the Greater Gāndhāra Region.[56]

Buddhist monks who went in search of Buddhist texts invariably travelled through Gāndhāra and left records of the conditions of these Buddhist centres. Fa Xian, the Chinese Buddhist monk who travelled in search of Buddhist texts between 399–414 CE, and Xuan Zang, who travelled between 629–645 CE, left records of the Buddhist activities, monuments and other details of this area. The collection of manuscripts, discovered by Sir Aurel Stein in the 1930s, which came to be known as the "Gilgit Manuscripts", provide an important resource in the study of Buddhism in Pakistan. These manuscripts, believed to be a part of a Seventh Century CE Buddhist library, were discovered in a stupa in Gilgit and comprise Buddhist manuscripts written on birch-bark and paper. These manuscripts were mostly written in Sanskrit using Brāhmi script and contain texts of the Mūlasarvastivāda school of Buddhism.[57]

Peshawar (Purushapura)

One of the earliest descriptions of Buddhism in the Peshawar Valley was written by Fa Xian. His description of Peshawar states: "*Going southwards from Gandhara (the travellers) in four days arrived at the kingdom Purushapura (the modern Peshawar). Formerly, when the Buddha was travelling in this country with his disciples, he said to Ananda, 'After my Parinirvana, there will be a king named Kanishka, who shall on this spot build a tope.' Of all the topes and temples which (the travellers) saw in their journeying, there was not one comparable to this in solemn beauty and majestic grandeur. There may be there more than seven hundred monks. When it is near midday, they bring out the bowl, and, along with common people, make their various offerings to it, after which they take their midday meal.*" [58]

The Peshawar Valley, which was known as the ancient city of Purushapura, has many monasteries, most of which haven't been excavated as yet. However, the few which has been excavated since the early 20th Century reveals a wealth of information regarding the existence of Buddhism in Peshawar. These excavations substantiate the descriptions of the historical documents.

Shah-ji-ki-Dheri

The ancient stūpa at Shah-ji-ki-Dheri has been identified as having been built by King Kanishka of the Kushan Dynasty, as recorded by Fa Xian. A gold[59] reliquary now at the Peshawar Museum was discovered during excavations at this stūpa in 1909 and is known as the Kanishka casket.[60] This casket is a beautiful example of early Kushan art and has a Buddha seated on a lotus in the Vajrāsana pose with right hand held in Abhaya Mudra as the central figure on the lid, flanked by Indra and Brahma in Anjali Mudra.[61]

Thareli

This large Buddhist complex located at the northern edge of the Peshawar Valley was excavated in the 1960s by a team of Japanese archaeologists. Thareli has three stūpa sites: a large stūpa on top of the mountain, a small stupa along the mountain pathway and another large stūpa at a lower level. These stūpas are flanked by multiple smaller stūpas and other imagery. These stūpas indicate more than one phase of construction - the earliest generally dated to the second century CE when the Kushan Dynasty (first to third century CE) controlled the Peshawar Valley.[62]

Sahri Bahlol

Sahri Bahlol is one of the three large Buddhist monastic sites located in the Peshawar Valley. This monastery includes many individual sites, none of which has been completely excavated as yet, thus the extent and the complex architectural and sculptural details cannot be understood completely. Sahri Bahlol monastery too consists of multiple stūpas, shrines and other structures with ornamental sculpture, statues of the Buddha and Bodhisattva as well as other ornamental architectural details.[63] Some of the sculpture and architectural details excavated are now displayed at the Peshawar museum.[64]

Ali Masjid

This is another monastic site located in the direction of the Khyber Pass in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan. There are two beautiful stūpas, one medium size and one small, at this monastery. Both stūpas are decorated with stucco mouldings and image niches, and other ornamental architectural details common among the Buddhist stūpas of Gāndhāra region.

Takht-i-Bahi

Takht-i-Bahi is also located within the Peshawar Valley and is one of the oldest and most important sites. The construction phases of the Takht-i-Bahi monastic site have been dated to circa 200 to 450 CE. The lower stūpa court of the main stūpa and some of the surrounding small stūpas at Takht-i-Bahi have been identified as the oldest part of the complex. The main stūpa is enclosed on three sides with a series of five large niche shrines almost identical to each other indicating that these shrines were planned and constructed at the same time. This monastery too was abundant with Buddhist sculpture including the Buddha, Bodhisattva, patrons, and other ornamental architectural details. Due to its importance as a centre for Buddhism in the ancient world as well as for the wealth of monuments and objects, Takht-i-Bahi was made a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1980.

There are many other Buddhist monastic sites in the Peshawar Valley, some of which haven't been excavated at all. Among the better known sites are Sikri, Jamal Garhi, Shahbaz-garhi, Mardan, and Mekhasanda. The number of monasteries within the Peshawar Valley indicates that Buddhism had a large number of followers within the valley and was supported by the rulers of the area during the early part of the first millennium. The number of monastic sites found within the valley also substantiates Fa Xian's statement about there being over 700 monks.

Taxila

Historically, Taxila was known as a centre for Buddhist studies and many Buddhist monks travelled to Taxila in search of manuscripts, teachers of Buddhism as well as for learned discourses about Buddhism. Fa Xian and Xuan Zang (the latter travelled in this area during the 7th Century CE) both visited Taxila. Fa Xian states: "*Seven days journey from this to the east brought the travellers to the kingdom of Takashasila. In these two places also large topes have been built, both adorned with layers of all the precious substances. The kings, ministers and people of the kingdoms around vie with one another in making offerings to them. The trains of those who come to scatter flowers and light lamps at them never cease. The nations of those quarters call those (and the other two mentioned before) 'the four great topes.*'" [65]

Dharmarajika stupa at Taxila. © Bindu Urugodawatte

Taxila has been dated to as early as the First Century BCE, making it one of the earliest Buddhist sites of Gāndhāra. Taxila consists of numerous temples and stūpas, the Dharmarājika stūpa being the most venerated and believed to have been constructed during the reign of Emperor Asōka. The podium of the stūpa below the dome consists of niches and other ornamental architectural details.[66]

Jaulian Monastery

The Jaulian monastery, located in the hills northeast of the Dharmarājika stūpa, provides another example of Gāndhāra art and architecture at its best. The Jaulian stūpa, similar to the stūpa at Takht-i-Bahi, is enclosed on three sides with five stucco image niches on each side facing the stūpa. Sir John Marshall, who excavated the Jaulian monastery during the early part of the twentieth century, discovered numerous Buddhist images and other decorated architectural details. The main and lower stūpa courts at Jaulian also contain a series of subsidiary stūpas, some of which has been excavated and conserved.[67] In most cases, it is the podium of the subsidiary stūpa that remains, the dome of the stūpa destroyed due to the ravages of time, political and religious upheavals.

Mohra Moradu Monastery

Southwest of the Jaulian monastery, located in the valley behind the Mohra Moradu village, is the monastery now known as Mohra Moradu. The main stūpa at this monastery was better preserved and larger than the main stūpa at the Jaulian monastery. This site was also initially excavated by Sir John Marshall and the initial construction phase dated to circa Second Century CE. An almost intact beautiful miniature stucco stūpa was discovered at Mohra Moradu monastery, providing substantial details of the architecture of the stūpa. This miniature stūpa consists of five levels of circular podiums prior to the dome and seven umbrellas (catra) from the square on top of the dome. The five podiums consist of image niches with images.[68]

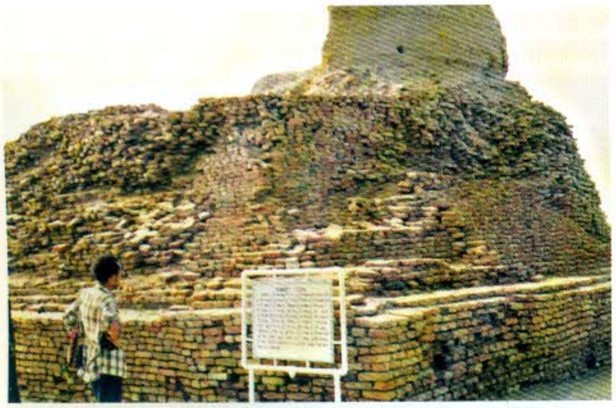
There are numerous other Buddhist archaeological remains at Taxila, which became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980. The construction phases of Buddhist monuments at Taxila is generally accepted to be between the First and Fifth Cntury CE; however Buddhism continued to be practiced at Taxila even after

Mohra Moradu stupa in Taxila © Bindu Urugodawatte the fifth century, although new Buddhist monuments were rare. There are number of sites around Taxila which is waiting excavation and conservation.[69]

Aziz Dheri

The site of Aziz Dheri near Mardan in the North-West Frontier Province in Pakistan has become an important site in the study of Buddhism in Pakistan. This site remained undisturbed until excavations were initiated in 1993, unlike at Takht-i-Bahi and Taxila, , where initial excavations were carried out during early Twentieth Century with the main motive being to identify monuments and sculpture. Aziz Dheri was studied with the objective of understanding the site as a part of the community and the overall historical landscape. The site of Aziz Dheri is important as it is the only stūpa settlement discovered in the area. In fact it is one of the largest settlement sites in the region and provides an uninterrupted cultural sequence of the Gāndhāra period. The Buddhist monuments at Aziz Dheri are a part of the larger settlement that supported the monastery. The Buddhist monuments include the main stūpa, votive stūpas, and cells, which were used as residences for monks. Many Buddhist sculptures including the Buddha, Bodhisattva statues and sculptural panels depicting various stories associated with Buddha have been discovered.[70]

The Buddhist monuments mentioned above are mainly from the North Western Frontier Province of Pakistan which was the heart of the Gandhara region. However, Buddhist monuments were also discovered in other parts of Pakistan, indicating the widespread influence of Buddhism. Among these, the stūpa built on top of the Indus Civilization site of Mohenjedaro dated to circa 200 CE is one of the sites which convey the spread of Buddhism[71]. Gandhara Buddhist sculptures have also been found in other areas such as Jhelum and Mirpur, further attesting to the widespread influence of Buddhism in Pakistan.[72]



Stupa at Mohenje Daro Indus Civilization site © Bindu Urugodawatte

A beautiful array of Gāndhāra Buddhist sculpture has been discovered in Pakistan, one of the most famous pieces being the grey schist statue of the fasting Siddhartha, dating to the Second or Third century CE, now at the Lahore Museum. This sculpture portrays the magnificence of Gāndhāra art. Even though architecturally simple, the Gāndhāra stūpa contains many stucco and stone images at the podium level, below the dome of the stūpa. These sculptures serve the dual purpose of offering a symbol for worship as well as a reminder of events from the life of the Buddha. Although the archaeological record shows a decline in the construction of Buddhist monuments and sculpture in Pakistan after the Fifth Century CE, Buddhism continued to flourish in Pakistan for more than 200 years as attested by Xuan Zang who visited Taxila in the early Seventh Century CE. The Buddhist monasteries in Pakistan, like the monasteries in Central Asia, were largely supported by the merchant community who were ardent Buddhists. The internal political strife and lack of conducive atmosphere for trade would have been instrumental in the lack of large scale Buddhist construction during the post Fifth Century period. However, these monasteries were repaired and maintained until the communities abandoned Buddhism in favour of Islam, starting from the Seventh Century CE.

Buddhism in Afghanistan

The conquest of Afghanistan by Alexander the Great during the Fourth Century BCE introduced the Greek script, art and architecture to modern Afghanistan region and beyond. Alexander ensured that information about Bactria (which includes parts of modern Afghanistan) was recorded by early Greek and Roman historians. By the early First Millennium CE, Greek art and culture was embedded in this region, developing its own style that came to be known as Greco-Bactrian. During the Kushan period, Bactrian script was used and coins and other documents have been discovered with this script.[73]

Afghanistan is also a part of the ancient region of Gāndhāra, an area abundant with Buddhist monasteries and Buddhist monks, which played an important role in the dissemination of Buddhism as well as Buddhist art in Asia. Buddhism was introduced to the Gāndhāra region during the reign of Emperor Asōka

Fasting Siddartha statue at the Lahore Museum © Bindu Urugodawatte of India during the Third Century BCE. This region is also famous for its Buddhist art and developed a distinctive style which has become world renowned.

During this period, which is known as the Golden Era of Gāndhāra, a language identified today as Gāndhāri was spoken in this region. Gāndhāri is one of the Prākrit vernacular languages (Middle Indo-Aryan Language Group) deriving from Sanskrit.[74] Gandhari is written using Kharosthi script, an adaptation of the Aramaic script used in the Achaemenian Empire[75] which sometimes had political control over the Gāndhāra region. Unlike the scripts of the Indian subcontinent, Kharosthi was written from right to left, occupying a unique position among Central Asian scripts. The Buddhist and other texts discovered in Afghanistan during the past two decades provide a hitherto unknown insight to the time when Buddhism was prominent in the country.

Fa Xian describes the region of Gāndhāra thus: "*The travellers, going downwards towards the east, in five days came to the country of Gāndhāra, the place where Dharma-Vivardhana, the son of Asōka, ruled. When Buddha was a Bodhisattva, he gave his eyes for another man here, and subsequently a large tope (stūpa) was built, adorned with layers of gold and silver plates. The people of the country were mostly students of the Hīnayāna.*"[76] Later travellers to India, such as Xuan Zang and others, leave much more comprehensive descriptions about Afghanistan and Buddhism.

Buddhist Art and Architecture of Gāndhāra (Afghanistan)

Buddhist art and architecture of Afghanistan, despite centuries of neglect and lack of patrons, have survived to the modern day to tell the story of an area where Buddhism remained supreme for centuries until it was submerged by Islam. The political upheavals during the last few decades and the war in Afghanistan caused more destruction and vandalizing of the Buddhist sites in a shorter period than had been the case for centuries. The shelling and looting of the Kabul Museum, and the looting of archaeological sites to obtain artefacts for the illicit trade in cultural objects, have caused much damage to Buddhist art and monuments in Afghanistan.

There are many Buddhist monastic sites in Afghanistan, the most famous of all being the Bamiyan monastic site. The destruction of the two colossal Buddha statues in March 2001 brought the attention of the world to Bamiyan. However, there are other large monasteries at Hadda, Shotorak, and clusters or isolated monasteries at Ahangaran, Balkh (Bactria), Bergram, Fondukistan and Takht-i-Rustam, which are in various states of preservation.

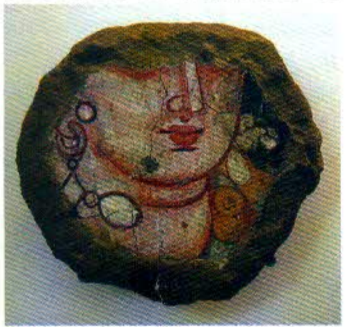
Bamiyan

Xuan Zang visited Bamiyan during his visit to India and left a detailed account of Bamiyan and its monastic activities. He describes the Buddhist monasteries thus: "*There are ten convents and about 1,000 priests. They belong to the Little Vehicle, and the school of the Lōkōttaravādins (Shwo-ch'uhshi-pu). To the north-east of the royal city, there is a mountain on the declivity of which is placed a stone figure of Buddha erect, in height 140 or 150 feet. Its golden hues sparkle on every side, and its precious ornaments dazzle the eyes by their brightness. To the east of this spot there is a convent, which was built by a former king of the country. To the east of the convent there is a standing figure of Sakya Buddha, made of metallic stone (teou-shih), in height 100 feet. It has been cast in different parts and joined together, and thus placed in a completed form as it stands. To the east of the city, twelve or thirteen li, there is a convent in which there is a figure of Buddha lying in a sleeping position, as when he attained Nirvana. The figure is in length about 1,000 feet or so. To the south-west of the convent of the sleeping figure (of Buddha), going 200 li or so . . . there is a sangharāma here with a tooth of the Buddha, also the tooth of a Pratyeka Buddha, who lived at the beginning of the Kalpa.*"[77] The two standing Buddha statues described by Xuan Zang have been identified as the statues at Bamiyan; however, recent excavations at the Eastern Monastery at Bamiyan revealed a statue of a sleeping or reclining Buddha, which is about 62 feet long, far smaller than the size of statue stated by Xuan Zang.[78] A sleeping Buddha statue discovered at Kampyr-Tepe on the Uzbekistan–Afghanistan border was suggested as the third Buddha statue mentioned by Xuan Zang. However, this statue is also much smaller than the size mentioned by Xuan Zang.[79]

Bamiyan monastery is located on the northern side of the Bamiyan valley and there are more than 751 rock-cut caves[80] spreading along the rocky cliffs. The actual construction dates of the monastic complex as well as the colossal statues at Bamiyan vary from the Fourth to Seventh Century CE.[81] J. Hackin dates the construction to be post-Third Century CE, but before the construction of the colossal Buddha statues at the Yungang grottoes in China in 460 CE. Benjamin Rowland dates the beginning of the complex to the Third to Fourth Century CE, while Itsuji Yoshikawa dates the site to the Fifth Century CE.[82] Takayasu Higuchi believes Bamiyan flourished between the Sixth to Seventh Centuries CE.[83] Deborah Kilburg-Salter believes the complex to have been created between the Seventh to Ninth Century CE.[84] The only definitive evidence is the record left by Xuan Zang, which mentions the two colossal statues of Buddha. As such, it can be assumed that both colossal statues were constructed prior to the visit of Xuan Zang who travelled to India between 629–645 CE and visited Bamiyan Circa 632 CE.[85] The dating of the Bamiyan statues is very important to the study of Buddhist art, as stated by J Hackin, if they were constructed before the colossal statues of Yungang and Kizil in China.

The now-destroyed smaller colossal statues of Buddha in Cave 155 (original height was 38m) used to be on the Eastern side of the valley and the larger colossal statue of Buddha in Cave 620 (original height 55m) used to be on the Western sides of the valley.[86] Most scholars agree that the Eastern Buddha statue at cave 155 was carved first, with access stairways dug as vertical tunnels up into the cliff walls to facilitate the excavation. However, this hindered the carving of the niche. The western statue of the Buddha was created by carving out a level tunnel from the hallway up the cliff, which was an architecturally sound method. Both statues had circumbulation passages at the base.[87]

The statues are now rubble, but the importance of Bamiyan is not based on these two artefacts alone. There are 751 rock-cut caves at Bamiyan used as residences, meditation centres, and storage places for the monks who resided there, as well as places of worship for lay devotees. There were also numerous stupas and other buildings in front of the Bamiyan cliff used for the daily activities of both the monks and the lay Buddhist patrons. Bamiyan was a merchant city that completely embraced Buddhism and supported it for centuries during the First Millennium CE and was visited by eminent monks from other Buddhist countries such as Xuan Zang (Circa 632 CE) and Hua Chao (Circa 727 CE), who described the city and monastery as a flourishing metropolis abundant with Buddhists, both monks and lay devotees. Even without the two colossal statues of Buddha, Bamiyan provides an important reflection of a thriving Buddhist community during the First Millennium.



Fragment of a mural painting from Bamiyan, 6th to 7th century CE, now at Musee Guimet in France. © Daniel Waugh

The rock-cut caves at Bamiyan comprise of four distinctive categories according to floor plan and ceiling types. These four categories are (1) square caves, (2) octagonal caves, (3) circular caves and (4) regular caves. The ceiling types of the square caves consist of (i) domed ceiling with horizontal bands, (ii) domed ceilings with tambour, (iii) domed ceilings with squinch arches, (iv) laternendecke and (v) flat ceilings. The ceiling types of the octagonal caves are (i) domed ceiling with horizontal band, (ii) domed ceiling with tambour, (iii) laternendecke and (iv) cross-vaulted ceilings. The circular caves only have domed ceilings. The regular caves consist of (i) flat ceilings, (ii) vaulted ceilings, (iii) laternendecke , and (iv) cross-vaulted ceilings. The regular caves with flat ceilings and vaulted ceilings are the most common and the most basic form of architecture at Bamiyan. The regular caves do not contain any sculpture or mural decorations and are believed to have served as space for the daily activities of the monks.[88] The other types of caves are not numerous; however, these were conspicuously constructed for public rituals of the Buddhist community at Bamiyan and contain paintings, sculpture, and ornamental decorations. There are about fifty caves with murals, most of which take the form of mandala paintings. The construction of stūpas within the rock-cut caves has only been discovered in two caves, which is in contrast to the rock-cut caves in India and Central Asia where central pillar caves or stūpa caves were very popular.

Sporadic efforts have been made by archaeologists to excavate at Bamiyan during the last century. A team of French archaeologists, including Prof. Zemaryalai Tarzi, have been working at Bamiyan since 2002 despite the sudden upheavals they face during their work. The team also hope to uncover the third Buddha statue (the Sleeping Buddha or Buddha in Parinirvāna) mentioned by Xuan Zang around Bamiyan which is larger than the statue already discovered in Bamiyan.[89] The Eastern Monastery was excavated southeast of the smaller colossal statue of Buddha. Bases of stūpas and other structures were discovered at the Eastern monastery. The excavations also revealed that Bamiyan was a flourishing city with glass and ceramic workshops.[90] Towards the end of the First Millennium, Buddhism in Bamiyan started to decline. The Mongol invasion of Bamiyan during the Thirteenth Century CE destroyed and burned much of the city, evidence of which is found during excavations. Thus, a city which flourished for centuries gradually became obscured and its past glory hidden.

A collection of manuscripts believed to have been from Bamiyan is now in the Schoyen Collection, one rare private collection accessible to the public. These manuscripts were written on palm leaf, birch-bark, leather and copper, using Brahmi, Kharosthi and Bactrian. The manuscripts have been dated to the Second to Seventh Century CE. The texts include the Āgama sutra, Mahāyāna sūtra, Vinaya, Abhidharma and Avadana texts.[91] These texts are in Sanskrit, Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, Gāndhāri, Bactrian and Prākrit languages, indicating that Bamiyan was an international centre of Buddhism where monks and scholars from other regions came to peruse the vast resources available.

Hadda

Hadda near the present city of Jellalabad is scattered with the ruins of Buddhist monasteries and is identified as the ancient city of Nagarahāra. The most important Buddhist monument at Hadda is considered to be the Great Stūpa, which is also known as the Top-e-Kalan or Tope Kelan, but was renamed by Prof. Zemaryalai Tarzi as Tapa-e-Top-e-Kalan (TTK) to distinguish it from the smaller stūpas in the area. The Great Stūpa is a part of a large monastic site which includes a large square stūpa court with seven shrines, and on three sides of the court there are eight large image niches.[92] The Great Stūpa was initially excavated by Charles Masson in 1834 CE who discovered relics that were deposited within the stūpa, including around 200 coins from the Third Century to Fifth Century, gold and silver rings, gems, and coral beads.[93] In 1978 and 1979, this site was re-excavated by Zemaryalai Tarzi who discovered the pilasters and sculpture around the podium of the steps. Tarzi's excavations also revealed that the seven shrines around the Great stūpa were constructed according to a unified architectural design.[94]

Small stupa from Tapa-Kalan monastery, now at Musee Guimet © Daniel Waugh

There is another monastery site southeast of the Great Stūpa Tapa-e-Top-e-Kalan known as the Tapa Kalan. The main stūpa is surrounded by a double row of smaller stūpas of different sizes and decorative sculpture that originally adorned the central stūpa. Buddha statues and Bodhisattva statues were discovered during excavations. West of Tapa Kalan is another monastic site, Tapa-i-Kafariha with a main stūpa and three large stūpas north of the main stūpa court. Near these three small stūpas, a long narrow gallery with image niches and images on platforms on either side of the gallery was discovered.[95]

Southwest of Tapa Kalan is another monastic site, Bagh-Gai. This monastery has two principal parts, a main stūpa court complex in the southeast and a monastic building complex in the northwest. The main stūpa was built on a massive platform with an access staircase facing southeast, with two small stūpas flanking each side of the staircase.[96]

Northeast of Hadda village is the Chakhil-i-Ghoundi monastery, which like the other monasteries in Hadda is dominated by a large stūpa. Three dhyānāsana Buddha statues, four standing Buddha relief sculptures, seated Buddha statues with dhyāna mudra, one seated Buddha image with Dharmacackra Mudra, and so on, have been found within the complex. Located north of Bagh-Gai is the Gar-nao Buddhist monastic site which has a rectangular stūpa court and two stūpas at the eastern end of which is the entrance to the main stūpa. All these sites are located within close proximity to the modern Hadda village and the abundance of Buddhist monastic ruins clearly indicate a former thriving Buddhist community, able to construct and support numerous monasteries within a very small area.[97] These monasteries had multiple stūpas and were all adorned with sculpture, creating a beautiful space for ritualistic activities.

Shotorak

Shotorak is another Buddhist monastic site in Afghanistan located north of Kabul, the modern capital city. This site was excavated by Jacques Meunie in 1937: other than a main stūpa, there were subsidiary stūpas with elaborate niches and stucco sculpture.[98]

There are many other Buddhist sites in Afghanistan such as Bergram, Paitava, Fondukistan, Ahangaran, Balkh, and Kunduz, spread throughout Afghanistan, a visible indication of the extent to which Buddhism was rooted in Afghanistan. Despite the political upheavals, archaeological excavations of Buddhist sites have been accomplished during the past few years. Most recently, a Buddhist monastery dating to the

Sculpture from Shotorak now at Musee Guimet in France © Daniel Waugh.

First Millennium CE was discovered at Mes Aynak during the construction of a copper mine and archaeologists are engaged in a rescue effort.[99]

Buddhism in Afghanistan started to decline with the Arab conquest around 795 CE and by 870 CE, Islam was deeply rooted after the rulers became Muslims. This marked the end of the Buddhist conquest of Afghanistan, leaving only the manuscripts and monasteries as evidence of a land which was predominantly Buddhist.[100]

Buddhism in Xinjiang Province of China

The modern Xinjiang Autonomous Region of the Peoples' Republic of China is also known as the Tarim Basin, Eastern Turkestan, Chinese Turkestan, and the Taklmakan desert region. The region is dominated by the Taklamakan desert and Buddhism was practiced in the oases which dotted the desert, during the First Millennium CE. These oases were important trading posts and halting places for the caravans of the merchants who travelled the Silk Route, which at this point skirted either side of the Taklamakan desert. The Buddhist sites in this region were identified, excavated, and the objects, including mural paintings, were removed to other countries during the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century CE. However, the secrets hidden beneath the Taklamakan desert are still being discovered by Chinese archaeologists in this region, although they are not as sensational as the discoveries made by western explorers during early Twentieth Century CE, these discoveries help us to understand a community which was predominantly Buddhist during the First Millennium CE. The oasis kingdoms of this area are referred to by the Chinese chronicles since the First Century BCE and eye witness accounts are provided by the Buddhist monks who traversed this area on their way to India in search of Buddhist texts. The oasis city states were also instrumental in the dissemination of Buddhism to China and East Asia and providing translators of Buddhist texts in Central Asia as well as China. There are many Buddhist monasteries in Chinese Turkestan and the most important sites are discussed below.

Kashgar

Kashgar (known as Shule in Chinese Historical Chronicles), was an important location on the Silk Route as it was the meeting place of the southern and northern routes that skirted the edge of the Taklamakan desert. Although the early city of Kashgar has not as yet been identified, five stūpas have been discovered north, northwest and northeast of the modern city of Kashgar. These stūpas, known as Topa Tim, Kurghan Tim, Kizil Debe, Khakanning-shahri (Tegurman) and Mauri Tim, are the most visible part of the monasteries which are no longer discernible. The Topa Tim stūpa is one of the oldest stūpas in the Kashgar region and has a circular base and a hemispherical dome similar to Dharmarājika stūpa at Taxila in Pakistan and is dated to circa theFirst Century CE. Kurghan Tim, the largest among the stūpas remaining in Kashgar, was constructed on a square base and is dated to circa the First to Second Century CE. The Kizil Debe stūpa is very unusual as it was constructed on a rectangular base and has been dated to the second century CE. The Khakanning-shahri stūpa was constructed on a square base but it has a cylindrical dome and probably dates from the Second Century CE. The Mauri Tim stūpa has different levels: a square base and a circular base on top of the square bases. The dome is ovoid or parabolic in shape and in the circular base still retains some of its decorative mouldings. These five stūpas, visible evidence of Buddhist monasteries in close proximity, indicate a high prevalence of Buddhists within the community.[101] The Chinese Buddhist monk travellers to India such as Xuan Zang and Wu Kong (circa 786 CE) describe the Buddhist activities in Kashgar providing valuable eyewitness accounts.[102] As with the other Central Asian kingdoms, Buddhism gradually declined with the introduction of Islam and the once prosperous Buddhist monasteries became neglected due to lack of patronage and gradually became engulfed by the environment.

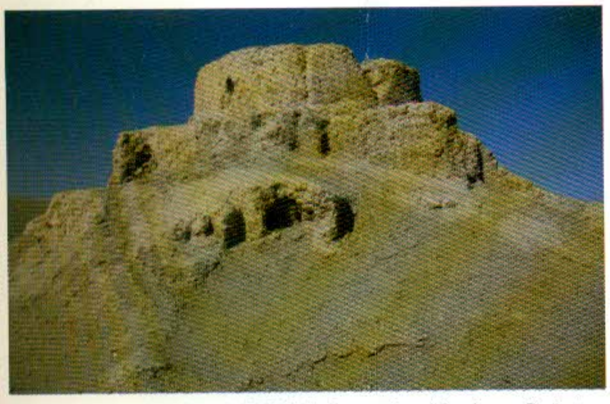
Khōtan

Khōtan was known as Yutian in Chinese historical chronicles and has been identified as Yotkan near the modern city of Hetian. There are ample literary records about Khōtan including the Khōtanese records, Chinese Historical Chronicles, records by Chinese Buddhist monks, and the Tibetan record of Khōtanese history *The Annals of Li Yul* providing information regarding the rulers, political situation and religions in Khōtan. Fa Xian, who travelled to India and Sri Lanka, describes Khōtan thus: "*Yu-Teen is a pleasant and prosperous kingdom, with a numerous and flourishing population. The inhabitants all profess our Law, and join together in its religious music for their enjoyment. The monks amount to several myriads, most of whom are students of the Mahāyāna. They all receive their food from the common store. Throughout the country the houses of the people stand, and each family has a small tope reared in front of its door. The smallest of these may be twenty cubits high, or rather more. They make (in the monasteries) rooms for monks from all quarters, the use of which is given to travelling monks who may arrive, and who are provided with whatever else they require. The lord of* *the country lodged Fa-hien and the others comfortably, and supplied their wants, in a monastery called Gomati, of the Mahāyāna school.*" [103] This description of the ancient kingdom of Khotan is further validated by the archaeological excavations carried out since the early Twentieth Century CE. The Chinese and Tibetan records name at least ten large monasteries in Khōtan such as Vairocana's monastery, The double-peaked Gosrnga monastery, which was identified and excavated by Sir Marc Aurel Stein, while entities such as the Mounds of Rodents have not been properly identified as yet. The archaeological excavations at Yotkan, Rawak, Dandan Uiliq, Aksipil, and Akterek sites within the kingdom of Khōtan have revealed that Buddhism was an important part of the community.

Rawak Monastery

The Rawak stūpa was constructed on a platform oriented to the cardinal directions, very similar to the description of the stūpa given in the third century text *Divyavadana*.[104] Stucco mouldings decorating the first platform were also discovered, along with staircases from each direction creating a distinctive cruciform shape of the podiums on which the dome of the stūpa is constructed.

Many pieces of Buddhist sculpture from Rawak, which were discovered and/or purchased by Sir Marc Aurel Stein, Nikolai F Petrovskii, and Count Otani, show multiple styles and origins and have been dated to be between the Third and Seventh Century CE. Stein discovered ninety-one individual statues from the south quadrant of the enclosed wall of the stūpa and Emil Trinkler discovered thirty-nine statues from the western quadrant of the enclosed wall of the stūpa. Among the statues discovered by Trinkler, twenty-five were still adhered to the wall surface of the enclosure wall. Most of the statues discovered were images of the Buddha which were life-size or larger. All the Buddha images appear to have the left hand holding the robe and although many of the right hands had not survived the ravages of time, it is possible to assume that the right hand was held in Abhaya or Vitarka Mudra. A few Bodhisattva statues and four guardian images were also discovered at Rawak.[105] Painted stucco statues of the Buddha, cast bronze statues of the Buddha, Bodhisattva Maitreya and Avalokitesvara-Padmapāni, have also been discovered around Khōtan,[106] This sculpture portrays a high level of skill as well as the fact that portable images were in fashion in Khōtan.



The stupa at Rawak © Photo 1187/2(243), International Dunhuang Project, British Library Board 2011.

The archaeological evidence of Buddhism in Khōtan was not limited to Buddhist sculpture and architecture, painted wooden votive tablets from Dandan Uiliq and wall paintings from Balawaste in the Khōtan region display master-craftsmanship. These paintings, as with the sculpture, signify a variety of influence at work, indicating that a Khōtanese school of Buddhist art was developed.[107]

Kuche (Ancient Kingdom of Qiusi)

The modern city of Kuche and the surrounding area was known as the kingdom of Qiusi during the First Millennium CE. Starting from the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) chronicles, the kingdom of Qiusi is referred to in almost all the subsequent chronicles, providing a continuous record of the kingdom. The language of the kingdom was the now extinct Tocharian B, also referred to as Kuchean, and Buddhist texts in Tocharian B have been discovered in the Kuche area. The kingdom of Qiusi also performed yeoman service in the dissemination of Buddhism not only within the region but even as far as China. The most famous son of Qiusi is the monk Kumarajiva, whose translations of Buddhist texts to Chinese are considered to be the most authentic.[108]

The Chinese Buddhist monks who passed through the kingdom, such as Xuan Zang, left detailed descriptions of Buddhist activities. Xuan Zang records: "*There are about one hundred convents (sangharāmas) in this country, with five thousand and more disciples. These belong to the Little Vehicle of the school of the Sarvistivādas. Their doctrine (teaching of Sutras) and their rules of discipline (principles of the Vinaya) are like those of India, and those who read them use the same (originals). They especially hold to the customs of the "gradual doctrine", and partake only of the three pure kinds of food. They live purely, and provoke others (by their conduct) to a religious life.*" [109]

Kizil Grottoes

The Buddhist monasteries scattered around modern Kuche are a sign of the influence of Buddhism in the area.

Among these monasteries, the largest surviving example, as well as the most spectacular, is the Kizil grottoes located near the modern Baicheng county of Kuche. The Kizil grottoes consist of 236 caves which have been dated to the Fourth to Seventh or Eighth Centuries CE. These 236 caves have been carved on the rock cliff and there are central pillar caves, colossal image caves and residence caves. These caves were used as places of worship for both monks and the lay patrons, and as meditation and residence caves for the monks. The Kizil grottoes have paintings of incidents from the life of the Buddha, Jataka stories, celestial beings, ornamental decorations, and the Buddha, Bodhisattva, Arahat, patrons, and other figures. The caves also contain many sculptures that provide a wonderful insight regarding the extent to which Buddhism was accepted by the community. The physical labour necessary to excavate 236 caves over a period of four centuries, and create colossal sculptures of Buddha as well as other sculpture and paintings, is indeed immense. This suggests that a wealthy and a prosperous Buddhist community lived in the area, which was able to support the creation of these caves as well as the large monastery with numerous Buddhist monks.

Kizil Grottoes near Kuche © Bindu Urugodawatte

Other Grotto Sites in Kuche

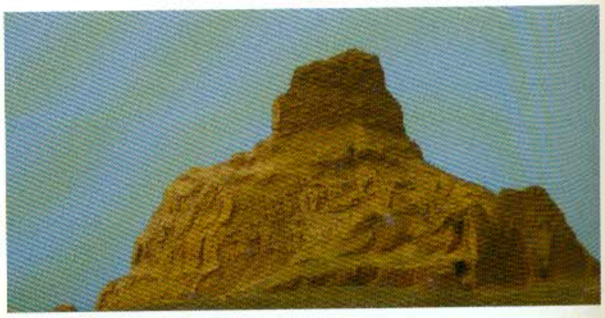
There are numerous other Buddhist monuments scattered in the region of Kuche attesting that Buddhism was the predominant religion in the region during the First Millennium CE. The other sites include the Kumutula grottoes with 114 caves,[110] the Simsim grottoes with 57 caves,[111] the Mazhabaha Grottoes with 32 caves, the Subashi grottoes with 7 caves, the Kizilgahar grottoes with 47 caves, the Taitaier grottoes with 18 caves, the Akatashi grottoes with 6 caves, the Yukaiduwei Grottoes with 2 caves, the Kalasu grottoes with 22 caves, the Dugan grottoes with 7 caves, Sakateka grottoes with 2 caves, Yixiake Gou Grottoes with 4 caves, Wenbashi Grottoes with 25 caves, and the Tuoyulakeaiken Grottoes with 20 caves.[112] The Grottoes mentioned above have not weathered the ravages of time and the number of caves only indicates the surviving caves and not the original number constructed.

Duldul-Akur Monastery

The Buddhist monuments at Kuche were not limited to monasteries associated with Grottoes. The ruins of the large Buddhist monastery at Duldul-Akur[113] near Kuche is not associated with a Grotto site.,. The Duldur-Akur monastic complex is surrounded by a fortress-like enclosure, within which there are stūpas, shrines and structures used by the monks as residences. Buddhist images of wood, including sculptures of the Buddha, a panel of Dipamkara Buddha, a miniature stūpa, a wooden image niche using the motif of a mountain, and fragments of paintings, were also discovered by Paul Pelliot. Most of these pieces are now at the Musee Guimet in Paris.[114]

Subashi Monastery

The Buddhist monastic ruins at Subashi are another important monastery on the east and west banks of the Kuche River. The Western Monastery at Subashi has three stūpas and many other structures created for the various activities of the monastery. Painted Buddhist reliquary boxes, wooden and clay Buddhist sculptures, decorative carvings, and wall paintings, were among the discoveries of the Western Monastery of Subashi. The Eastern Monastery at Subashi stretches along the Eastern bank of the Kuche River and consists of a stūpa on the southwest side, niches with images, shrines and residences of monks.[115] The large number of Grottoes and monasteries in close proximity within the area of Kuche in the Taklamakan desert provide evidence of a prosperous Buddhist community in Kuche during the First Millennium CE.



Stupa at Subashi © Bindu Urugodawatte

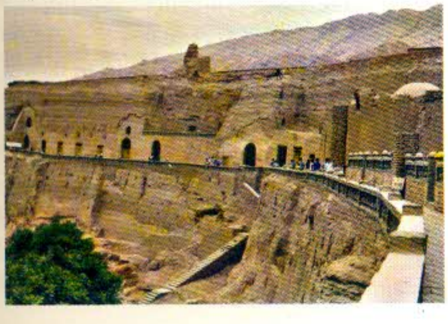
Turfan (Turpan)

Turfan was an important trading post on the Northern Silk Route between Hami and Kashgar. Turfan was dominated by Chinese, Xiongnu (Hsiung-nu), Tibetans, Uigurs and Mongols during various periods during the last two Millennia.[116] The now extinct Tocharian A language was native to the Turfan area and many documents written in Brāhmi script in 'Tocharian A' have been discovered in Turfan. During the foreign expeditions to the Tarim Basin in the early Twentieth Century CE, a large number of hand-copied Buddhist manuscripts were discovered in the ancient cities of Kocho (Gaochang) and Yarkhoto (Jiaohe) in Turfan. The inscriptions in the Astana tombs have many dedicatory examples which refer to Buddhist patrons and their activities. An epitaph in the tomb of Lady Dong Zhenying, who died in 667 CE, refers to her as being a "*faithful follower of the Buddha and a pure female-believer*" and contains a list of Buddhist texts she copied, the sutra readings she sponsored, as well as the contributions she made towards the support of 300 Buddhist monks.[117] These epitaphs at the Astana graves provide an interesting insight to the Buddhist activities in Turfan.

At the ancient cities of Kocho and Yarkhoto, Buddhist monasteries were constructed by the local community. These monasteries included niches to hold Buddha images and rooms which were used as residences for the Buddhist monks. These monuments are among the numerous structures which have survived the ravages of time due to the extreme dryness of the Turfan area. Steles erected by the imperial families of Turfan to commemorate the completion of the construction of Buddhist temples and over forty temples of shrines named after the prominent families of Turfan have also been discovered.[118]

Among the ancient Buddhist monasteries in Turfan, the Bezeklyk (Bezeklik, Bozekelike) and Toyoq (Toyuk, Tuyugou) Grottoes take an important place. The donor or the patron of many of the caves at Bezeklyk is placed in a prominent position within the cave. These donors at Bezeklyk include the imperial families of Turfan during different regimes, lay patrons and monks whose names are inscribed on the cartouche accompanying their picture, mostly in Uighur script but sometimes also in Chinese.[119]

During the early Twentieth Century CE, the expeditions to Turfan between 1902–1914 by a German team discovered 580 Buddhist banners used as mobile votive offerings. These Banners and banner fragments, now at the Museum of Indian Art in Berlin, are made of silk, ramie, cotton and occasionally paper. The banners depict Mahāyāna Buddhist themes such as different manifestations of the Buddha, various forms of Bodhisattva, and so on.[120] The German expeditions to Turfan also discovered documents in sixteen languages written in twenty-five different scripts that portray the cosmopolitan nature of Turfan as an important centre in trade routes as well as a centre for the dissemination of information. Buddhist texts discovered in Turfan are estimated to have been written between the Fourth to Fourteenth Century CE, and the ruler of Turfan converted to Islam in the Fifteenth Century CE ensuring the obliteration of Buddhism in Turfan.[121] The Buddhist monasteries, grottoes, manuscripts, and epitaphs from the Astana graves and banners provide ample evidence of a prosperous Buddhist community in Turfan during the First Millennium CE. However, contributions towards Buddhist monasteries steadily declined from the early Second Millennium in the Turfan area probably due to the fact that most of the merchants whose wealth initiated new construction had converted to Islam and thus no longer supported Buddhism.[122]



Bezeklyk Grottoes in Turfan © Bindu Urugodawatte

There are many Buddhist monasteries and grottoes in the Xinjiang Province (Eastern Turkestan) of China. These include Shorchuk, Murtuk, Karashar, Tumshuk, Niya, and Loulan: many Buddhist monuments, manuscripts and other votive objects have been discovered at these sites. There were small Buddhist communities in the Xinjiang Province until about the Fifteenth Century CE but the large scale construction, copying of manuscripts, creation of votive objects and portable votive objects rapidly declined during the early Second Millennium CE. This decline can be observed all through the oasis kingdoms of Central Asia including Xinjiang.

Buddhism in Kazakhstan

Modern Kazakhstan became an important part of the Silk Road, the International Trade Route connecting East and West, from the Sixth to Thirteenth Century CE, mainly due to the local conflicts in the Fergana Valley, which made the shorter route more hazardous to travel, while the increasing power of the Turkic Kagans in the South-Eastern part Kazakhstan promoted safe travel.[123] This increased the prosperity of modern Kazakhstan along with the introduction of multiple religions, Buddhism being one of them.

Kayalyk Monastery

Ruins of a Buddhist temples were discovered during excavations at Kayalyk[124] located in the Sarkand District of the Almaty region of Kazakhstan. Kayalyk was an important city on the Silk Road during the latter part of the First Millennium CE and was known as Rubruka in ancient literary sources. The Buddhist monastery constructed within the city walls indicates that it was an important religion within the city.[125] The archaeological evidence demonstrates that the Buddhist monastery was active from the Eighth to Fourteenth Century CE. The temple has a central room with a corridor around it and was constructed of mud bricks. There were two distinctive periods of construction at this temple, the second phase of construction following destruction, probably by an earthquake. The excavations also revealed that the temple was burnt down at one stage. There were fissures cut through bricks which served probably as heating ducts of the temple.[126]

Akyrtash Monastery

The archaeological site of Akyrtas (Akyrtash) located east of Taraz city is considered to be another site with Buddhist remains. Some scholars believe the monuments constructed of red sandstone blocks once functioned as a Buddhist monastery. However, further archaeological studies are needed in order to confirm the functions of the Akyrtas site.[127] This temple, too, has evidence of multiple phases of construction due to destruction caused by earthquakes.[128]

Tamgaly Tas

The Buddhist rock engravings at Tamgaly Tas consist of three main rocks carved with images from Tantric Buddhism. The three main rock surfaces and a few other rock surfaces also have religious invocation inscriptions in Tibetan, Mongol-Djungar and Manchu, indicating perhaps the different donors who contributed to the creation of these engravings, which include the historical Buddha Sakyamuni, the transcendental Buddhas, Bodhisattva and Nagarjuna. These engravings are believed to have been created by the Oirat-Djungar people who converted to Tibetan Tantric Buddhism possibly during the Sixteenth Century CE. This site was built on an important river crossing of the Silk Road with a community that prospered due to trade. This Buddhist community disappeared from Tamgaly Tas by the middle of the Eighteenth Century CE. Unfortunately, this site is being severely damaged by vandals.[129]

Buddhism in Kazakhstan seems to have been most active along the border regions of China where Buddhism was flourishing with the patronage of rulers and merchants of the area. Further archaeological studies are needed to understand the extent Buddhism spread in modern Kazakhstan.

Buddhism in Kyrgyzstan

The ancient Silk Road passed through parts of modern Kyrgyzstan and thus the introduction of Buddhism was inevitable. There are many ruins of Buddhist temples that have been discovered by the archaeologists providing evidence for the extent of the dissemination of Buddhism within modern Kyrgyzstan. Lake Issyk-Kul and the Talas-Chi corridor of Kyrgyzstan were important areas of the Silk Road and many Buddhist monuments are found in this area. Xuan Zang referred to the Chu valley (Chui/Chuy Valley) of Kyrgyzstan in his famous travelogue *Da Tang Xi Yu Ji* or the *Journey to the West*.

Navikat Monastery of Chu Valley

Archaeological excavations in the Chu Valley have revealed many monuments including Buddhist monasteries. These monuments have been dated to have been constructed between the Fifth and Twelfth Centuries CE and reflect the influence of multiple cultures including Chinese and Indian.[130] The excavations at Temple 2 at Navikat (the modern city of Krasnaya Rechka), dated to 8th century CE revealed a shrine with a domed roof and the remains of a reclining statue of the Buddha made of clay was discovered in the rear corridor. Bodhisattva statues were also discovered in the southern corridor of the shrine and on either side of the entrance to the shrine. The excavations of the western corridor revealed plastered walls with frescoes. Fragments of paintings, inscriptions, fragments of Sanskrit birch-bark manuscripts written in Brahmi script, gilded bronze statues of Bodhisattva and other deities have been discovered at this monastic site.[131]

Ak-Beshim Monastery of Chu Valley

The Ak-Beshim monastery in the Chu valley is another important Buddhist temple to be excavated. This is a large monastic complex built on an east – west axis which has been dated to late Seventh Century or early Eighth Century CE. Ak-Beshim is extremely rich in architecture, sculpture and paintings. One of the most important discoveries was the large statue of a seated Buddha, small painted figures in clay, and gilded metal medallions representing the Buddha and Bodhisattva. This monastic complex seems to have been burnt down by the latter half of the Eighth Century CE. East of this temple, approximately 250m away, another smaller Buddhist shrine was discovered with sculptures and paintings. This shrine was destroyed during the early Eighth Century CE.[132] Ruins of Buddhist monasteries were also discovered in the Lake Issyk–Kul area. Excavations in this area provided evidence of Buddhist architecture and sculpture.

The archaeological excavations in Kyrgyzstan have revealed the impact of Buddhism during the First Millennium CE and the importance of Buddhism as a religion. However, further studies are needed to understand the extent of Buddhist temples in Kyrgyzstan.

Buddhism in Tajikistan

Modern Tajikistan was part of the ancient kingdom of Sogdiana, an important country on the Silk Road as well as being the place where Buddhism flourished during the First Millennium CE. Buddhist manuscripts, monasteries and other Buddhist votive objects discovered in Tajikistan attest to the spread of Buddhism in modern Tajikistan.

Penjikent (Panjakent, Panjikent, Panjekent, Pyanjekent)

Penjikent near the border of modern Uzbekistan was an important city of the Sogdian kingdom and was a flourishing centre for Buddhism, along with Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism during the First Millennium CE. The ancient city of Penjikent flourished from the Fifth to Eighth Centuries and many of its structures were constructed using mud bricks.[133] One of the structures, which is known as Temple II, contains paintings which have been dated to the Sixth Century CE which indicate a distinctive Buddhist style of architecture. This painting, known as the "funerary painting" is very similar to the Parinirvāna scenes depicted in Buddhist art and the scene with crowned riders at the Temple II, known as the "kings" represent characteristics found in the painted representation of the war for the holy relics of Buddha. This has led for some scholars such as G Verardi to propose that these temples were originally were constructed as Buddhist temples.[134] The secular residences of Penjikent also contained paintings on the walls and in a house with granary dated to the end of the seventh century CE or early eighth century CE, a painted representation of Buddha has been discovered.[135] Two almost life-sized wooden carvings similar to Bodhisattva figures have been discovered at Penjikent providing another clue to the existence of Buddhism in the modern Tajikistan.[136] The wall paintings at Penjikent have a striking similarity to the Buddhist narrative paintings which was popular in Buddhist art.[137] Buddhist inscriptions on pottery was also discovered at Penjikent,[138] which was partially destroyed by fire in 722 CE and completely destroyed in 760 CE, leaving minute evidence for the existence of Buddhism in Penjikent.

Ajina Tepa (Adzhina-Tepe, Ajina Tepe, Adjina Tepe)

Ajina Tepa monastery is an extremely large scale monastery located near the Kurgan Tyube (Qurghonteppa, Kurganteppa) in Tajikistan. The Ajina Tepa monastery has been dated from the coins excavated from the site, andto latter half of the Seventh Century CE to first half of the Eighth Century CE.[139] This monastery consisted of two important parts – the temple or the shrines for the secular worshippers and the monastic part which functioned as the residence for the monks.[140] The temple section has a large stūpa constructed in the central courtyard of the northwest part of the Ajina Tepa. There are small stūpas within the structures around the large stūpa. The residence part of the monastery has many cells used for the daily activities of the monks. Ajina Tepa functioned as a Buddhist monastic complex for more than 100 years, with numerous renovations and repairs continuously carried out on the architecture, sculpture and the paintings in order to maintain the religious activities. During the heyday of Ajina Tepa, the structures which surrounded the stūpa were decorated with paintings on the walls and the ceilings as indicated by the fragments of paintings discovered. The paintings include religious imagery as well as paintings of the donors or the patrons who supported the monastery. Among the sculptures discovered at this site, the most important is the clay statue of Buddha in a reclining posture or in the *Nirvāna* posture discovered in 1966 during the excavations of the circumambulatory corridor which is known as Room 23 and the original length of this statue of Buddha would have been about 12m. Among the other sculptures discovered at this monastery include, a head of the Buddha, Bodhisattva figures and other decorative sculpture.[141]

The other Buddhist monasteries discovered in Tajikistan includes Kafir Kala (Kafir-gala) monastic site west of Kolkhozabad, Kalai-Kafirnigan monastery in Kulyabskaya Oblast, Khuttal monastic cluster in Viloyati Khatlon. These Buddhist monasteries indicate the extent of Buddhist communities in modern Tajikistan. These monasteries were destroyed by the Eighth Century CE with the arrival of Arabs in the area and many of these Buddhist monasteries were destroyed. However, some tangible aspects of Buddhist art have survived to the modern era as portrayed by the traditional Tajik Jewellery. The traditional Tajik wedding crown or diadem known as "Kosh-tillo" or "Tillya-Kosh" meaning the golden eyebrows with a heraldic composition of Lion, Monkey and Turtle are believed to be representations of Buddhism indicating the numerous past lives of the Sakyamuni

Buddha. The Tajik brooch known as "kulfi-girebon" can be found among the sculpture of Gods adorning the Ajina Tepa monastery.[142] These are indication of the cultural assimilation of Buddhism to the Tajik society even after the practice of Buddhism disappeared from Tajikistan more than a Millennium ago.

Buddhism in Uzbekistan

The ancient cities of Samarkand and Bukhara in modern Uzbekistan were important cities of the Silk Road visited not only by the merchants but numerous Buddhist pilgrims, travellers in search of texts and many others. Modern Uzbekistan was the land where the ancient kingdom of Sogdiana flourished. Sogdians and Sogdiana played an important role in the dissemination of Buddhism in Central Asia and in translating Buddhist texts into various languages during the 1st Millennium CE.

Among the travellers who visited the land of modern Uzbekistan, Xuan Zang left a description of Samarkand providing contemporary information of an ancient city: "*The country of Sa-mo-kien (Samarkand) is about 1600 or 1700 li in circuit. The precious merchandise of many foreign countries is stored up here. The inhabitants are skilful in the arts and trades beyond those of other countries*."[143]

Uzbekistan is dotted with Buddhist monasteries most of which were abandoned with the Arab conquest and the introduction of Islam to the area. These monasteries can only be identified through extensive archaeological excavations. Uzbekistan has been carrying out archaeological excavations since 1950s and has discovered quite a few Buddhist monuments but there are many more waiting to be discovered.

Airtam

A large Buddhist monastic complex was discovered by accident in 1932 and subsequently excavated. The stūpa was constructed within a walled complex, but the dome of the stūpa was destroyed too much to identify the shape of it. The stūpa had been dated to middle of Second Century CE. During excavations in 1979, a smaller stūpa was discovered on the Southwest side of the main stūpa constructed directly on ground level rather than on a platform as the main stūpa. Fragments of a stūpa, umbrella, limestone blocks carved with busts of female celestial figures in acanthus leaves, and fragments of Buddha, Bodhisattva figures, were discovered at the site. These excavations revealed that Airtam monastery was a Buddhist monastery which required the support of a large community to maintain its activities.[144]

Kara-Tepe

Kara-Tepe Buddhist monastery is a Rock-cut Buddhist cave (Grotto) complex similar to the Grottoes in Kuche and Turfan in Chinese Turkestan and Bamiyan in Afghanistan. The excavations revealed approximately ten caves cut into the natural rock and have been dated to First to Third Century CE and started to decline by the end of Fourth Century CE. Inscriptions on ceramics written in black ink, discovered at Kara-Tepe provide valuable information regarding this monastery. These inscriptions, written in Kharōsthi, Brāhmi and Bactrian scripts have references to "Kadevaka vihara" (King's temple) frequently, indicating that it was an imperial temple receiving the patronage of the imperial family. This complex includes courtyards, stūpas, paintings, sculpture, niches for the Buddhist statues, a sketch of a stūpa etc. The paintings include polychrome paintings of Buddha and his disciples, a Dhyānāsana Buddha surrounded by two layers of flames, trees, etc. The ceramic inscriptions at Kara-Tepe indicates that this temple was visited by people during post Buddhist era as well, prior to succumbing to the ravages of time until it was rediscovered in the Twentieth Century CE.[145]

Fayaz-Tepe

Fayaz-Tepe is another ancient Buddhist monastery in modern Uzbekistan which was discovered around 1968. This monastery was constructed on a northwest–southeast axis and consists of a stūpa and the temple. The stūpa was renovated after the original construction and a covering added to the stūpa which has helped to preserve the stūpa. The monastery also contains residences for the monks, lecture hall, shrines for worshipping, kitchen, store rooms, areas for weaving and making ceramics, etc. Fragmentary paintings were also discovered at this monastery, including paintings of Buddhas and female figures probably representing patrons. The sculpture at Fayaz-Tepe includes Buddha in Dhyānāsana mudra, Buddha with his disciples. The construction at this monastery gradually taper off from the Fourth Century CE. [146]

Dalverzin-Tepe

Dalverzin-Tepe was a city which was dated to the Greco-Bactrian period of Third to Second Century BCE. Archaeological excavations at this ancient city revealed two Buddhist temples, one within the city walls, known as Temple - 2 and the other outside the city walls known as Temple - 1. The Temple - 1 has a stūpa and long narrow rooms surrounding the stūpa on three sides. The room on the north side of the stūpa has been identified as a shrine where images of Buddha were worshipped as seen from the pieces of the Buddha statues discovered there. Another room which has been designated as the "king's hall" due to the large number of images representing secular persons (portrait sculpture) indicate that this temple was patronized by the rulers of Dalverzin-Tepe. The Temple - 1 has been dated to First to Second Century CE and excavations revealed that the temple was destroyed while it was still been used as a place of worship by the Buddhist community around Third Century CE and it was used as a tomb site of the Zoroastrian community. The Temple - 2 located within a city walls has been dated to the early Second Century CE and was constructed on top of some earlier buildings using sun-dried mud bricks. A large number of pieces of Buddha statues and Bodhisattva statues have been discovered at this temple and was destroyed during the Third Century CE while it was still being used as place of worship by the Buddhist community, and another structure constructed on top of the Buddhist temple[147].

Buddhist monasteries have also been discovered in Kuva in the Fergana valley, Zar Tepe Buddhist monastery in Southern Uzbekistan, etc., are discovered few of them. Other than these Buddhist monasteries the Koy-Krylgan Kala and Toprak Kala Parthian and Sasanian archaeological sites in Khorezm region portray a close affinity and influence of Buddhist art, confirming that despite the decline of Buddhism in modern Uzbekistan, Buddhist art had become enshrined as a part of the culture and continued be a part of the culture. Buddhism in most parts of modern Uzbekistan was attacked by the Zoroastrianism around the 3rd Century CE and gradually disappeared from the religious landscape.

Conclusion

Buddhism in Central Asia has a long and complex history. Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhist schools were all prevalent in various parts of Central Asia during various periods of its history. Buddhism was the most important religion in Central Asia during the First Millennium CE and started to decline in modern Iran and Uzbekistan as early as the Third Century CE due to persecution by Zoroastrianism. In other areas, Buddhism flourished as the major religion until the conquest of Arabs of Central Asia and introduction of Islam which led to some destruction of Buddha statues, as idol worship was not encouraged in Islam. Despite Islamic religious restrictions, very little evidence of wanton destruction of Buddhist monasteries by the Arabian armies has been found through excavations, unlike at Dalverzin-Tepe and in Iran where there is evidence of Zoroastrianists destroying living Buddhist monasteries. During the conquest of Genghis Khan in Central Asia, many of the Buddhist monasteries were destroyed due to the destruction of the cities by the army of Genghis Khan.

Central Asia also played an important role in the dissemination of Buddhism in China and other East Asian countries. The Buddhist art of Central Asia was important in the development of art of China and the Buddhist clergy of Central Asia were important as translators of Buddhist texts in China. Buddhist texts in different languages used in Central Asia convey the fact that Buddhism was disseminated in local languages.

As Islam became the predominant religion in Central Asia, the patronage of the Buddhist monasteries by the merchants who traversed Central Asia ceased, thus the number of new constructions or renovations of Buddhist monasteries decreased rapidly. This lack of patronage of the merchants of Central Asia is the main reason for the lack of construction of new monasteries, sculpture or paintings in Central Asian monasteries such as the Kizil grottoes during the post Seventh Century CE period, even though Buddhism was still prevalent in small communities.

Buddhism is not a living religion in Central Asia anymore, even though there are few Buddhists still remaining in Central Asia, such as the Han Chinese who migrated to the Xinjiang Province of China during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911 CE), the Koreans who settled in Uzbekistan and Oirat-Djungar in Kazakhstan. The ethnicities of Central Asia who embraced Buddhism during the First Millennium CE are no longer Buddhists, and even some of the languages, cultures and even people have been absorbed by different languages and cultures. This is evident from the disappearance of Tocharian A and B, Khotanese, Bactrian, and Sogdian from Central Asia. These multiple languages and cultures were the true corner stone of Buddhism in Central Asia which has left a rich inheritance of Buddhism, Buddhist art and architecture in a landscape where Buddhism is no longer in existence as a living religion.

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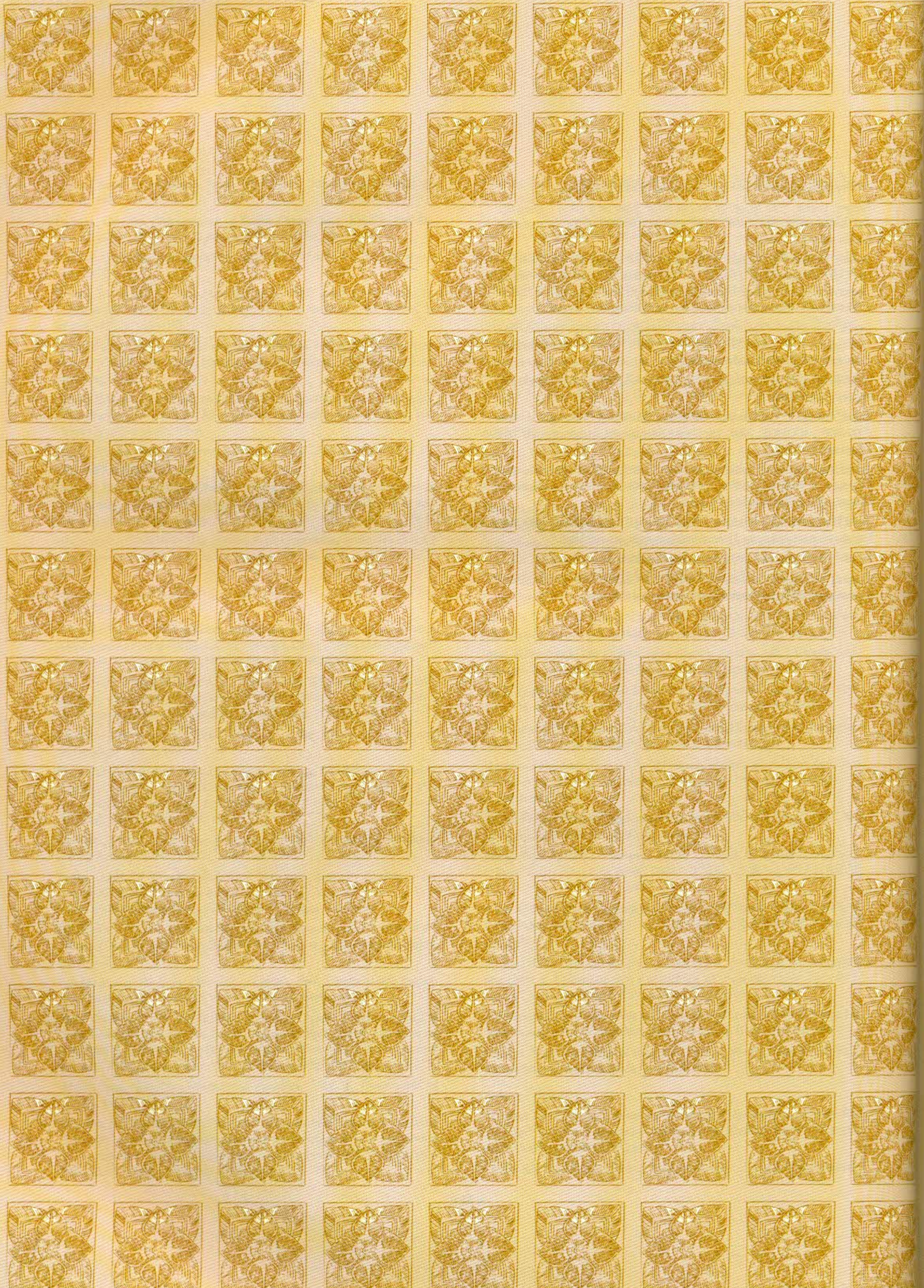

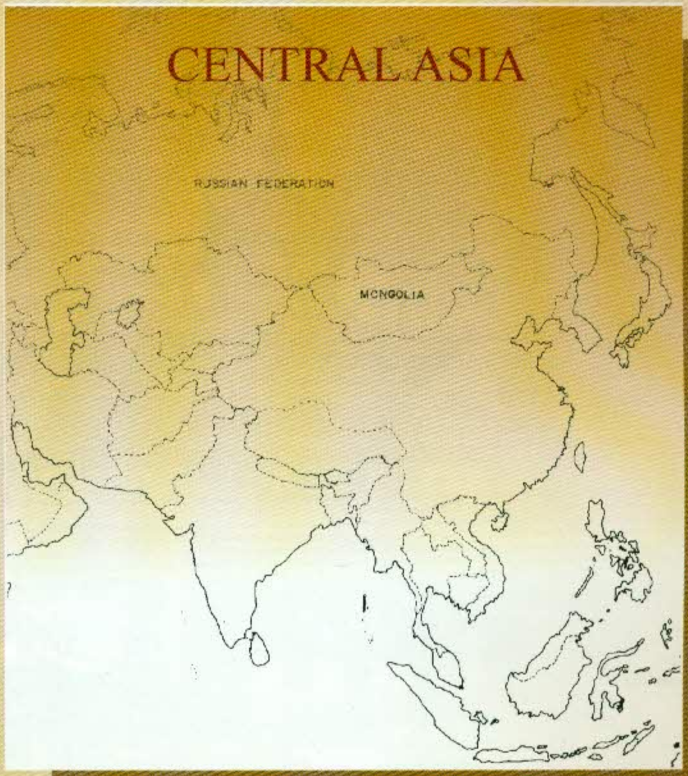
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The Golden Temple - Elista, Kalmykia

ESSAY 23

Buddhism in Russia

SY Lepekhov

Introduction

The peculiar character of Buddhism's position in Russia ensues from the fact that it appeared together with the peoples who adhered to it as the Russian state encroached upon Asia. It acquired an official status relatively quickly despite the fact that Orthodoxy was the main state religion and that the principles and norms of the freedom of religion were unknown in the country at that period. Since Buddhism was considered a foreign faith until the nineteenth century, the development of policy towards it was in the hands of the organizations directly associated with the Russian foreign office.

The main purpose of the Russian government was to make the Buddhist church a useful tool of administration over the non-Russian ethnic groups - Buryats, Tuvinians, Kalmyks - incorporated into the Russian empire. This purpose was mainly pursued by the administrative methods by empowering the Buddhist hierarchs with certain juridical rights and duties and making them controllable by the tsarist authorities. It should be noted that the Russian government did not set a goal to influence the teachings and dogmas of Buddhism. Nor did it establish any kind of censorship over the contents of Buddhist religious literature.

The Making of the Buddhist Sangha in the Russian Empire

Buddhism started spreading in the territory of Russia since the seventeenth century among the Buryats and Kalmyks. By the end of the eighteenth century it also firmly established itself in Tuva, though the initial contacts of the Tuvinians with Buddhism commenced as early as the thirteenth century. The first stage of Kalmyk acquaintance with Buddhism also was in the thirteenth century and is connected with the spread of the Tibetan *Sakya* school teachings among them. In 1578, Altan Khan adopted the document "Teaching of the Ten Virtues of Buddhism", regulating the relationships between the Mongolian aristocracy and the sangha. Since that moment Buddhism, represented by many Tibetan schools, acquired official status among the Oirats. A special role in the consolidation of Buddhism among the Oirats was played by the well-known Oirat spiritual and political figure Zaya-pandita (Namhaichzhamtso, 1599-1662).

In the beginning of the seventeenth century the Oirat tribes of Derbet and Torgout roamed from Dzungaria to the south Siberian steppes where they started to be named the Kalmyks ("those who separated"). By the 1660s-1670s the new Kalmyk khanate appeared in the Russian lands. Since that time Buddhism began to spread among the Kalmyks in Russia. The first Buddhist monasteries of the nomadic Kalmyks were mobile. In 1616, the Darhan-Dorjin-kit monastery was built near the contemporary city of Semipalatinsk. In 1656 Ablain-kit was founded, followed in 1670 by Botoktukhan-kit, Djalin-obo Ochirtukhan-kit, and Tsagan-sume. In 1640, at the convention of the Mongolian and Oirat tribal aristocrats' Shamanism, the formerly prevalent faith was declared against the law and since then Buddhism has been the only religion of the Kalmyks. During the reign of the Ayuki-khan the Kalmyk khanate strengthened its spiritual ties with Tibet. In 1718, Shukur-lama came from Tibet to head the Kalmyk sangha. In 1771, as most Kalmyks roamed back to China, the Kalmyk khanate ceased to exist and the remaining 13,000 Kalmyk families resettled in the valleys of the Ural, Terek and Kuma. By the late seventeenth century fourteen Kalmyk Buddhist monasteries functioned in Russia.

In 1689, as a result of the Treaty of Nerchinsk, the Buryat population of Transbaikalia became Russian subjects. As stated in the official documents of the Kulomzin commission at that period, "among the Mongolian clans who came into Russian allegiance there are already the followers of the Lamaist faith with two *shiretui* (lama elders) heading them".

Initially, Buddhist religious buildings were represented by the princely chapel-yurts and dismountable *sume* (communal chapels), which roamed together with the population. Around the mid-eighteenth century the construction of stationary temples (*datsans*) started. Together with Buddhism the Buryats acquired the Mongolian script. In general, the Mongolian cultural influence on the Buryats intensified.

In 1712, 100 Mongolian and fifty Tibetan lamas arrived in Transbaikalia after fleeing from the military turmoil in Mongolia. In 1727, the state border between Russia and China was demarcated and the border crossing rules for different classes of people were established. Before the demarcation of the border (1727) Mongolian and Tibetan lamas could freely cross the border into Russia, preach there for a while and then return.

After the border demarcation, control was required over the religious affairs of the Buryats. In 1728, the "Instruction for the Border Guards" was compiled regarding the prohibition of lamas to enter Russian territory; about restriction of contact with Mongolia and China; and the necessity to organize the teaching of the Mongolian script and grammar as well as Buddhist faith to Buryat boys so that eventually they could become Buddhist clergy in Russia.

The 1728, the "Instruction" was practically the first official document that recognized Buddhism and regulated the first measures undertaken to develop it in Russia. In a decree by Empress Elizabeth dated 1741, Buddhism was recognized as one of the faiths of Russia ("sanctioned religion") and the lamas were grouped into a separate estate exempt from duties and taxes. According to the "Instruction" each ethnic clan of Transbaikalia received a status of an administrative establishment headed by a clan chief. Lupsan-taisha, who was mentioned in the "Instruction", was the elder son of Ukhin-taisha and headed the Tsongol clan from 1723 to 1736. By the petition regarding the establishment of a chief lama submitted by the heads of the Tsongol clan in 1732, which was then granted, a Tibetan lama named Choidje Agvan-Puntsok was assigned this position.

In 1751, Tsongol (Hilgantuiskii) *datsan* was founded and Agvan-Puntsok became its first prior. His disciple Damba-Darzha Zayaev (Zayagin, 1711-1777) was sent to Lhasa in 1724 where he received vestiture from the Panchen-lama and the Dalai Lama. In 1764, Damba Zayaev was officially assigned *pandido-hambo-lama* (the supreme lama) of the entire Transbaikalia. In 1741, Zhimba Akhaldaev founded the Tamchinskii (Gusinoozerskii) *datsan* and, after the death of Damba Zayaev, became the *pandido-hambo-lama* together with the prior of the Tsongol *datsan* Sodnompil Heturkheev. In 1809, the Tamchinskii temple, at that time the religious center of all left-bank Selenga Buryats, became the supreme (*hambinskii*) *sume* of the entire Transbaikalia.

The loss of undivided authority in the Buddhist hierarchy led to two simultaneous orientations in the Buryat Buddhism: one on Tibet, another on Urga. In 1770, *hambo-lama* Ahaldain headed five temples of the right-bank Selenga: Gusinoozerskii (Khul-nor), Deristui, Ichetui, Atsai, and Burgaltai (Old Sartul) *datsans*. Later, the Zagustai temple ceded from the Atsai *datsan*.

In 1773, the Kudun *datsan* (Dashiin-Lhumboling temple) was built on the southern side of the Chelsan mountain. Its first *shiretui* (prior) was a Mongolian lama, Lubsan Dondub. In 1786, the Tugnui *datsan* (Dashi Choikhorling) was erected. In 1775, Khori *taisha* (chief) Damba-Dugar Rintseev (1768-1804) built the Aninsk *datsan* (Gandan-Shiddubling). Its first *shiretui* was the *shiretui* of the Kudun *datsan* named Puntsok-lama. His successor Lobsan-Sobdo (lay name Dava-Norane) played an important role in the spread of Buddhism in Buryatia. In 1811, the Aginsk *datsan* was founded. In 1814, the Alar *datsan* was built and the Barguzin *datsan* appeared in 1818. In 1825, the Egitui *datsan* ceded from the Aninsk *datsan*.

In 1826, the Atsagat (Gandan Dardzhining) and Tsugol (Dashii Choipelling) *datsans* were founded. The founder of the Tsugol temple was Lobsan Lhundub Dandarov, one of the best-known lamas in the history of Buddhism in Buryatia. Lobsan Dandarov founded the first Buryat school of classical Buddhist philosophical education (*tsannit*). The *tsannit* school of the Tsugol temple served as a foundation for other schools in other Buryat temples. Lobsan Dandarov's disciple and successor was Galsan-Zhimba Dylgyrov (1816-1872), the second prior of the Tsugol temple. GJ Dylgyrov translated into Mongolian, as well as adapted and published, a number of writings belonging to Tibetan authors. Among the writings were Sumba Kkhanbo ("Pagsam Chzhonsan") and Tsongkhapa ("Lamrim"), which are the basic texts on the history of Tibetan Buddhism and its methodology.

Between 1826 and 1828 the Chesan *datsan* (Gandan-Dashiiling) was built, followed by the Tsolga *datsan* in 1831. The prior of the Tsolga temple was the outstanding Buryat educator and scholar Rinchen Nomtoev (1820-1907), who authored a comprehensive Tibetan-Mongolian lexicon as well as works on grammar and ethnography.

The fifth prior of the Aginsk temple, Galsan-Zhimba Tugulturov (?-1873), translated a number of works from Tibetan to Mongolian and wrote the Tibetan-Mongolian dictionary "A Lantern Explaining the Meaning of Words of Grammar." The prior (*shiretui*) of the Aninskii temple Lobsan-Galdan-rinpoche was the author of the "Serene Mirror", an adapted exposition of Tsonkhapa's "Lamrim." The works of Kudun lama Irdyni-Haibtszun Galshiev and the seventh prior of the Aginsk datsan Lubsan-Dorzhi Danzhinov (1816-1901), in which the basics of Buddhist teaching were expounded in a popular form, were widespread. L-D Danjinov was the teacher (*yonzon-lama*) of the first Buryat reincarnated (*hubilgan*) of *ganjirva-gegen* Sumaev. After his death, Danjinov was declared a Bodhisattva.

The first movable temples – *huree* – appeared in Tuva in the 1720s. The first stationary temples were Erzinskii (1772) and Samagaltaiskii (Oyunnarskii, 1773). Later the Baikara-*huree*, Chaakholskii, Sharabulgunskii and Nizhne-Chaadanskii *huree* were built. The prior of the latter temple was practically the leader of the Tuvinian clergy. Formally, Buddhists in Tuva were subjects of the Mongolian Djebtszun-damba-khutukhta.

Since the early nineteenth century the tsarist government took several steps to centralize and regulate the structure of the Buddhist clergy. In 1800, the *bakshi* of the Lesser Derbet huruls named Soibing was appointed the First Lama of the Kalmyk people by Emperor Paul I. He received a charter "to freely exercise all spiritual rituals according to the Kalmyk law". In 1834, the Council of the Kalmyk Administration was formed, which included the Lamaist Spiritual Directory under the authority of the Lama of the Kalmyk people. The "Statute of 1847" disbanded the Lamaist Spiritual Directory and turned the Lama of the Kalmyk people into a state bureaucrat answerable to the Governing Senate. The total number of the Lamaist clergy according to the statute was not to exceed 1,530. Monks were subdivided into three categories (*mandzhi, getsul, gelyung*). The Don Kalmyks had their own Bakshi-lama. The Ural and Orenburg Kalmyks were neither subject to the Lama of the Kalmyk people, nor to the Bakshi-lama.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the number of lamas in Transbaikalia exceeded 2,500, which caused anxiety in the government and among the Russian Orthodox clergy. On May 15, 1853 the Senate passed the "Statute about the Lamaist Clergy in East Siberia" in which the number of *datsans* was set at thirty-four and lamas at 285. According to this calculation one lama represented 200 church members. The appointment was only possible if there were official documents issued by the government's authorities to the graduates of the Gusinoozersk School of monks.

The clergy status applied only to the officially appointed (so-called *komplektnye*) lamas. The rest were outlawed regardless of their authority and popularity among the people. Despite the fact that the tsarist government strove to suppress foreign contacts of the Buryat Buddhist clergy, spiritual ties with the Buddhists of Tibet and Mongolia did not stop. Many Buryats wanted to receive education in Tibetan and Mongolian *datsans*. "The Statute of 1853" abolished all hierarchical positions in the temples except the *hambo-lama*, the leader of the entire Buddhist clergy of Transbaikalia and the *shiretui* (priors of Buryat Buddhist temples). Inside a *datsan* clergy were divided according to their spiritual degrees. According to the statute there were three of them: *bandi*, *getsul*, and *gelyung*. The *hambo-lama* was approved by the Department of Spiritual Affairs of the Foreign Faiths of the Ministry of the Interior.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the Kalmyks built stationary *huruls*. The best-known and most important of them was the Hosheut *hurul*. Its erection was connected with the participation of the Kalmyks in the Patriotic war of 1812. One of the most important relics preserved there was the banner with which the Kalmyks ended the war against Napoleon.

By the early twentieth century the number of *huruls* significantly exceeded the allowed limits and reached ninety-two. The clergy grew as well. If in some villages of Buryatia the number of lamas accounted for one half of the total population, in Kalmykia the numbers were smaller, but still quite significant. Like in Buryatia, to have a family member in a monastery or temple was considered an honourable and sacred deed.

At the same time, Buddhism actively developed in Tuva. Between 1905 and 1907 the largest temple in Tuva, named the Verkhne-Chaadanskii *huree,* was built. In that temple in 1907 Tibetan lama Kuntan-rimpoche (Erimbochi) organized the Higher School for Buddhist clergy.

The so-called contemplator-lamas practicing Vadzhrayana Shagzha (1858-1909) methods played a particularly important role in the development of Buryat Buddhism. Shagzha, who chose Alhanai Holy Mountain (in the contemporary Zabaikalskii region) as the place of his asceticism, was a descendant of a noble clan that produced a number of famous Buryat Buddhist figures. Lubsan-Sandan Tsydenov (1850-1922) became the founder of a new reformist direction in Buddhism that accentuated the out-of-temple organizational forms and practices. His disciple Agvan-Silnam-Tuzol-Dorzhi (Dorzhi Badmaev), a religious poet, was father of Bidiyarada Dandaron (1914-1974). BD Dandaron wrote a number of works on the philosophy and history of Buddhism.

Agvan Dorzhiev

The Buryat religious figure Agvan-Lubsan Dorzhiev (1857-1930) played an important role in the history of Buddhism in Russia. Having held the highest post in the Tibetan government (minister of finance) and being one of the spiritual guides of the Dalai Lama XIII, Agvan Dorzhiev made an unprecedented contribution to the development of the Russian-Tibetan and Russian-Mongolian relations, provided assistance to famous explorers of Central Asia such as PK Kozlov, MV Pevtsov, DA Klements, EE Ukhtomsky, and F. Sherbatsky. The Russian Imperial Geographic Society had to declare

Agvan Dorzhiev's merits before Russian scientists accepted him as a member.

In November 1907, Agvan Dorzhiev wrote a report "On establishing closer relations between Russia and Mongolia and Tibet" to the Vice-President of the Russian Geographic Society PP Semyonov-Tyanshansky substantiating the expediency of merging Tibet, Mongolia and Russia on a cultural and economic basis into a "great Buddhist confederation". Dorzhiev offered the central role in this union to Russia as a protector of the Mongols and Tibetans from the oppression of China, Japan and England. Weakened by the war with Japan, Russia could not afford to worsen its relations with England and had to decline the offer of Dorzhiev made on behalf of the Dalai Lama. Nonetheless, the diplomatic efforts of Dorzhiev in this direction ended in the successful signing of a Tibetan-Mongolian treaty on the mutual recognition of these two countries' independence. As Russian orientalist NS.Kuleshov states, "The treaty of 1913 on the independence of Tibet is one of the most prominent acts of Agvan Dorzhiev". The diplomatic efforts of Dorzhiev were focused on strengthening the independence of the peoples of Tibet and Mongolia as well as on establishing closer relations between Russia, Mongolia and Tibet and maintaining peace in the Central Asian region.

The world outside the Buryat ethnic community was treated by its representatives as: (1) the Russian imperial state community; (2) the Mongolian speaking cultural community going back to the empire of Genghis-khan, which could be interpreted in various contexts both as a state entity and a civilizational one; and (3) the Buddhist civilization.

There was a tendency towards merging these three identifications; the Russian empire being a part of Buddhist civilization since it was ruled by a benevolent tsar whereas the fact that Mongol khans patronized Buddhism in numerous Central and Eastern Asian historiographies was unquestionable.

It is clear that under such conditions a mobilization of civilizational identity could stimulate (and stimulated) the further mobilization of deeply rooted levels of self-consciousness; moreover in this case there took place a major elimination of inter-ethnical conflicts.

It is this approach that Dorzhiev considered most acceptable. A considerable change in the national policy of the tsarist government in 1905 stimulated development of the national self-consciousness of the whole empire's population including Buryats. Dorzhiev happened to be in Russia at that time, and he took up activities aimed to consolidate Buryats. As Ts. Zhamsarano stated, "a group of active Buryats has made a start to the efforts aimed to unite all groups of the Buryat population of the Zabaikalsk oblast and Irkutsk province on the basis of spiritual, legal and economic oppression, to develop the masses' understanding of the law and self-consciousness, support and promote the existing communist initiatives further widening the field of their activity" (Zhamsarano, 1905, p.170).

Dorzhiev's motivation in his works can be expressed in the following principles:

1. Buddhism is useful to all living beings and represents civilizational unity which can be enlarged (first of all by adding Russia and possibly other European countries).
2. Uniting Russia and Tibet into a single civilizational entity would improve the position of Buddhist believers in both countries, primarily the position of Buryats and Kalmyks.
3. The spreading of Buddhism among all Buryats would benefit the improvement of educational, cultural and civilizational level of the Buryat people.

These goals were to benefit from the introduction of

Oldest Buddhist Temple in Europe (exel. kalmykia) datsan Guhzechoinei in Saint Petersburg-1915

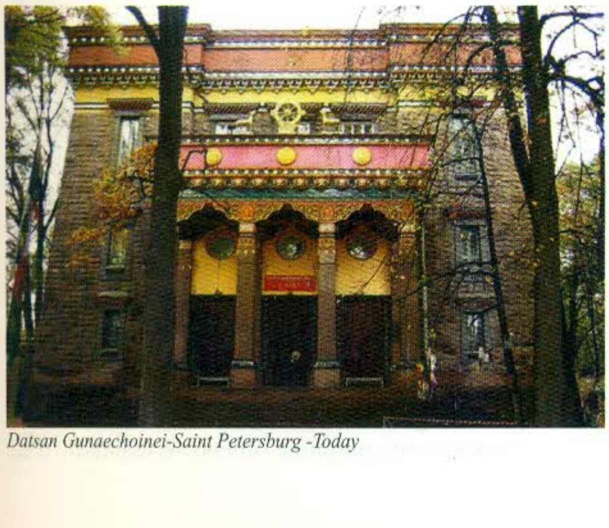
Crowd at the Temple

the alphabet developed by Dorzhiev on the basis of the Old Mongolian language, as well as from a founding a printing house, Naran, the construction of a Buddhist temple in Saint Petersburg, founding philosophic schools Choira in Kalmykia - or the Buddhist Academy, as Dorzhiev called it – and diplomatic activities aimed to strengthen the independence of Tibet and Mongolia and develop their relations with Russia. There took place efforts to strengthen the position of the Buddhist clergy not only at the regional but also at the all-Russian level. Thus the decisions of the all-Buryat congresses included suggestions to direct a representative of the Buddhist clergy to the State Council and give the *Shiretuis* (priors) of *Datsans* the right to take part in the elections of the members of the State Duma (Zhamsarano, 1907, p. 5).

The tendency to identify the Russian empire and Buddhist civilization can be found in the short characteristics given by Dorzhiev to various countries determining the geopolitical situation in Asia at that time in his autobiography written in 1921 in the Mongolian language. He regarded Tibet as "The highest country" and "The land of snow"; Russia as "full of power"; Sri Lanka as the place where "the sacred religion dwells"; China and England as "cruel"; and Tibet and Mongolia as having been "living in peace from ancient times". It is peculiar that Japan, a country where Buddhism is professed, is considered "harmful" since its war with Russia weakened the ability of the latter to conduct a strong policy towards Tibet and China and finally organize a "great conference of Buddhist countries". Dorzhiev did not regard China as a civilizational unity. For instance, the district of "Utaishan" is a "holy land" and Beijing is a "country that used to be a benevolent friend and now turned into an enemy". Dorzhiev understood that for Buddhists and Tibet in particular, contacts with Western civilization are inevitable. That is why the policy of isolationism advocated by conservatives is not only ineffective but also dangerous to the Buddhist world. It is necessary to hold negotiations and as far as it is possible make Westerners familiar with Buddhism. While in France, Dorzhiev read a sermon in which he greets Clemenceau and the other high-ranking officials. Clemenceau was characterized by Dorzhiev as a man possessing the "perfect wisdom" of a Buddhist.

The overthrow of the monarchy was treated by Dorzhiev negatively since the "White Hero-Tsar" was considered by him the main patron of Buddhism in Russia. In his autobiography he writes: "Beginning from the times of the Khan elected by many and up to the present people are divided into sovereigns and citizens. People for many tens of thousands of years have been living according to the laws of tsars and slaves. In our times both the tsars and the slaves have grown completely unaccustomed to these customs. All kinds of absurd laws have been created. Because of that lots of sad events took place. Some time ago there came people who acquired a great wisdom and did not spare their own life for the happiness of the people. They were cruelly suppressed. The so-called keepers of the Christian religion bluntly and cruelly oppressed people and thus caused everybody's fear soon. It is hard to make the state stronger when the power has become weaker." (A Dorzhiev. 2003, pp. 63-64)

Evidently the Romanov dynasty is treated here as a part of the Buddhist mythological genealogy, comparing the tsars benevolent to Buddhism to the common forefather – the mythical Indian tsar Makhassamata. A particular responsibility for what was happening is put by Dorzhiev on the "so-called keepers of the Christian faith". But most likely Dorzhiev means certain people here and not the Christian religion as a whole. Thus he blames Rasputin and "all those who have brought the country to the



Datsan Gunaechoinei-Saint Petersburg -Today

magha puja

disturbance", and negatively characterizes the clergymen ("the ill-intentioned long-haired ones") hindering his work aimed to found the Saint-Petersburg temple and Datsans in the Irkutsk province." (A. Dorzhiev. 2003, pp. 60-61)

Dorzhiev played a certain role in the salvation of the statue of the Sandalwood Buddha raja Udayana (Sandalwood Buddha-Zadan Zhuu), which, according to the legend, was created in Buddha Sakyamuni's lifetime. It was a reliquary for his relics and over the 2,600 years of its existence the statue has visited many Buddhist countries. Its ancient age can be seen in the Indian style of the figure in tight drapery and in a very rarely encountered image of right and left hands with parted fingers. In the early twentieth century the statue was in Beijing, China. During the Boxer Rebellion it was rescued from a burning temple and secretly moved to Russia. There, in Buryatia's Egitui *datsan,* it was preserved. Having survived the fire of the Russian Civil war and during the anti-Buddhist repressions of the 1920s-1930s, it was for a long time kept in a museum and then returned to the Egitui *datsan* where it is presently displayed.

Buddhism in Russia in the Course of the Revolutionary Transformations of the Twentieth Century: The Renovationism Movement in Russian Buddhism

In 1905, under revolutionary pressure, the tsarist government had to declare the right to freedom of conscience that was reflected in the Imperial Manifesto "On the consolidation of toleration origins". The manifesto proclaimed the right to change Orthodoxy for other faiths, which gave many baptized Buryats a chance to return to Buddhism. From that moment on, the position of Buddhism in Buryatia considerably strengthened and continued to consolidate, especially after the February Revolution of 1917. On March 3, 1917, the Provisional Government issued a decree "On the abolition of religious and national limitations" in which all citizens' rights were made equal regardless of nationality and faith. The main principles of this decree were further confirmed and clarified in a special decree entitled "On the Freedom of Consciousness" dated July 14, 1917. In this way, for the first time in Russia, a legal foundation was laid for genuine religious equality. At that time the period of the highest growth of Buddhism in Russia commenced. After the February Revolution and during the first years of Soviet power ten new *dugans* (worship buildings) were laid in Buryatia. In Tyva between 1905 and 1907 the largest temple Verkhe-Chaadanskii *huree* was erected. In that temple in 1907 Tibetan lama Kuntan-rimpoche (Erimbochi) organized the Higher School for Buddhist clergy.

Dorzhiev, who was the main ideologue of the so-called "Renovationism" movement, played a significant role in the development of Buddhism in Russia.

In its classical form the "renovationism" movement originated in Sri Lanka as a reaction to colonialism, Western technology and ideology, and Christian missionary expansionism. In the late nineteenth century efforts to restore a sense of national dignity replaced passive endurance of colonial oppression. Buddhism as a religion deeply rooted in national consciousness on the one hand, and having high esteem in the western intellectual circles on the other, was well suited to become an ideology of national revival. A process of reinterpretation of Buddhism as a teaching, close in its sense to the progressive ideas of the West, started among the educated urban Buddhists. This approach underlined rationalist moments, closeness to the scientific comprehension of the world, and, unlike Christianity, orientation towards experimental verification of its teaching rather than "blind faith" dogmas and revelation. Since Buddhism, at the time of the renovationists, included many elements that did not fit this scheme, Buddhists in cooperation with European students of Buddhism have analyzed the Pali canon. In doing so they tried to reconstruct the hypothetic "original" Buddhism, using the European critical methodology, and relating everything that did not fit their set objective to "later layers". Protective rituals and practices of accumulating good deeds widely accepted and practiced in the traditional Buddhism, especially in rural communities, were criticized by them. Representatives of neo-Buddhism were descendants from a new social layer that emerged during colonial times. This layer to a greater extent absorbed the spirit of Western civilization. In essence, they took the Western edition of Buddhism, heavily influenced by Protestantism, and used it in their own interpretation of Buddhism as a rationalistic, pragmatic and socially active phenomenon.

European Buddhology that highly valued Buddhism, and the enthusiastic interest to Buddhism in the West, gave significant moral support to the Buddhists of South Asia.

The founders of the Theosophical Society, Colonel Henry Olcott and Helena Blavatsky, came to Colombo in 1880 and publicly took upon themselves five layman's vows. This was, possibly, the first case of conversion to Buddhism of Westerners. In the same year Olcott and the Ceylonese Don David Hewavitarne, better-known under his Buddhist name Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933), opened Buddhist schools for young people that contributed to the significant growth of interest in Buddhism.

For educational purposes Olcott compiled "The

Buddhist Catechism" that became widely known in the West, including Russia, where it became one of the main sources of knowledge about Buddhism.

In 1891 renovationist Buddhism became formally organized. After a visit to Bodh Gai (in North India where Buddha received enlightenment) Dharmapala organized the Society of Great Enlightenment (Maha Bodhi Society). This was the start of the creation of a global network of modernized Buddhism. Among its purposes were the struggle against the disdainful attitude to Buddhists and the restoration of Buddhism in India. It is significant that this society was led not by monks (as it was traditionally accepted), but laymen.

The renovationist movement in Russia was similar. Russian renovationists assessed the position of national peripheries in Russia, such as Buryatia, as absolutely comparable to the position of Western colonies.

The emergence of the renovationist movement relates to the time of the tsarist government's reforms in Transbaikalia. It appeared as a reaction to Russian expansion as well as the policy of the government aimed at forced assimilation and Christianization of the Buryat people.

Renovationists strove to keep their ethnos from assimilation. At the same time they left the Buryat people a possibility to familiarize themselves with Russian European culture relying on their national religion – Buddhism. In 1905, not yet having any official position in the Buddhist church hierarchy or lay administration, outstanding representatives of this movement Badzar Baradiin, Tsyben Zhamtsarano and Lyksok Gonchikozhapov addressed SY Vitte with a letter in support of Buddhists. In it they advocated protection of the dignity of Buddhists and their right to freely exercise their faith without fear of religion-based discrimination.

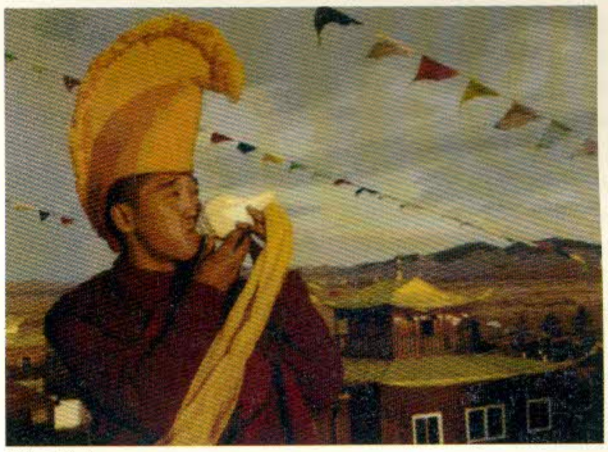
It became clear for the leaders of the Renovationist movement that in such traditionally Buddhist regions as Buryatia and Kalmykia, Buddhism could develop only if the main Buddhist works were translated into native languages. Services in Tibetan language conducted at Buryat *datsans* originally were no different from Buddhist sermons and could only be understood by a few highly educated lamas.

Ajahn Sumedho

Two components can be outlined in the process of renovationism. One is administrative, another is philosophical-doctrinal. The former presupposed a change of the church's administrative structure; electiveness order of the administrative positions of the *datsans*: *hambo-lama*, *shiretui* (priors), treasurers, and so on; principles of distribution of temples' incomes; definition of the expense categories of the church's budget; limitation on the personal expenses and subsistence of lamas; changes of financial control mechanisms; and development of new principles of interaction between the lamas and the flock. The philosophical-doctrinal renovationism set a goal of reforming the very teaching of Buddhist faith and cult practice in accordance with the principles of some "original" or "early" Buddhism as the representatives of this movement saw them. This "early" Buddhism was seen by them as a philosophical-ethical teaching, whose following did not presuppose the exercise of any kind of ritual.

The best-educated representatives of Buryat intelligentsia, such as Ts. Zhamtsarano, B Baradin, E Rinchino, and G Tsybikov, strove to revive "pure" Buddhism, reform the church, make Buddhist ethics comprehensible for the masses, and to carry out the national-cultural revival of the Buryat people on this basis. There was another task as well: to unify Buddhist clergy from different national regions and create a single all-Russian Buddhist confession.

The October revolution regarded by Dorzhiev as



Tibet Monk

a "great disturbance" was treated by him negatively. Nevertheless, he supposed that there still existed possibilities to adapt Buddhism to the new political conditions. In his speech at the All-Union Assembly of Buddhists in January 1927 in Moscow, Dorzhiev made an attempt to show the ideological closeness of the main principles of Buddhism and Marxism: "Buddhism is a teaching of liberation from darkness and ignorance by way of learning and attaining the highest degree of intellectual development… Though the West European culture has reached a high level of development it has not offered a sufficient explanation of the law of causality, has not struggled with the base instincts of man. The basis of egoism and property, 'Me' and 'Mine', have developed to a greatest degree; everybody cares of his own well-being based on misfortunes of the others, and all achievements of culture are used as a means of exploitation and enslavement of one man, one nation by another one. As a result capitalism and imperialism - the sources of the whole mankind's misfortune have evolved."

That great thinker of Western Europe, Karl Marx, discovered these contradictions and the sources of mankind's misfortune, and Lenin gave a start to this teaching and showed the way to build a new life based on brotherhood and justice, and the abolition of property – the source of all the low instincts of man.

"We, Buddhists, believe in the victory of truth and justice, in the victory of cognition and spiritual perfection over darkness and ignorance, in the destruction of evil and source of the mankind's misfortunes – capitalism and imperialism" (Safranova ES, *Buddhism in Russia*: Moscow, 1998, p. 75). It is worth mentioning that private property is considered by Buddhism as a source of social evil. Not only is a single existence conditioned by karma and is subordinate to the law of cause-dependant occurrence (*pratitjasamutpada*, "the law of the causality" according to Dorzhiev) but the whole world is dependent on this law's influence since the cause of the world's occurrence is the total karma of all living beings. It is possible to leave *samsara* only as a result of the Buddha's preaching of karma. In order to reach enlightenment all living beings need three great *kalpas* during which all karma as a result of the vital activity of all living beings gets exhausted.

Buddhism's social concept treats human history during one *kalpa* as a gradual degradation of living beings born by intellect, possessing a perfect physique and supernatural abilities, feeding on joy and living long. Existing in *samsara* makes them subject to the law of *pratitjasamutpada* and the action of one of its factors – the strife of sensual experience. As a result of this desire, harsh food was exchanged for pure joy and the physical nature of man degraded. The laziness of one man led to the accumulation of food and thus the notions of "mine" and "property" appeared. The capture of alien property led to the necessity to found the power of a tsar for its protection (Ostrovskaya, Rudoy, 1994, pp. 41-48). It can be mentioned that as early as 1905, Ts. Zhamsarano considered the propagation of Buddhism among Buryats conductive to the "development of the existing communist basis", though of course under "the communist basis" he meant something absolutely different from that which was meant by the Bolsheviks headed by Lenin. Nevertheless, Dorzhiev took part in the dialogue with the Bolsheviks and in doing so was almost on equal terms with them. There are reasons to believe that the decree issued by the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) on October 14, 1920, in which it was considered necessary to "maintain the autonomy in the form adequate to concrete conditions for those eastern nationalities which do not have any autonomous institutions yet, and especially for Buryats and Kalmyks" was also a result of discussions with Dorzhiev.

His autobiography *Curious Notes: a description of a journey around the world* is proof of the fact that Dorzhiev treated the year 1917 in the context of global civilizational change. He writes: "The ones busy with petty and lazy deals that did not study and see other countries said: 'Let's live the way we used to'. Those addicted to the old and did not understand the essence has done no good to the religion. Their intolerance is simply harmful. They who preserve the precious religion have grown adapted to the old frivolous customs and accomplished deeds lying beyond the rules set for *khuvaraks*. Careless sinners like myself are used to having large property. Such life corresponds neither to the changes of this time nor the principle of the religion of all times. It is certainly harmful for the religion. If the situation is not improved it is possible to lose the religion. Saying prayers I intend to urgently send to the Dalai Lama a message saying that Tibet can become anyone's prey, that the greatest harm to the religion will be done if Muslims come there. Having that in mind it is necessary to befriend everybody" (A Dorzhiev. 2003, pp. 67-68).

Thus, according to his retrospective outlook on the development of inter-civilizational relations in the Central Asian region, Dorzhiev considered peaceful interaction with the Western (Christian) civilization possible and forecast the undesirable effects of contact with the Islamic civilization. It can be pointed out that there is a strong resemblance between Dorzhiev's scenario and Huntington's later model of a conflict between civilizations.

Dorzhiev's understanding of the civilizational processes in Central Asia was certainly affected by his unique experience of being a diplomat, political and state figure. But primarily his world-outlook was conditioned by his Buddhist viewpoint.

The Soviet decree "On the Separation of Church from State and School from Church" dated January 23, (2 February), 1918, basically confirmed and consolidated many democratic achievements of the February Revolution in the field of freedom of conscience. However, alongside them ideological interests of a secular state were better secured. Leaders of the Renovationist movement set themselves a task, in the conditions that formed, to develop new principles of relations between the Buddhist church and the state. They strove to use to the maximum the democratic freedoms proclaimed by the Soviet regime and, simultaneously, bring the Buryat Buddhism closer to the best classical examples of ancient Indian Buddhism. Renovationists declared their loyalty to the Soviet regime and readiness for radical reforms. At first a large part of the traditional Buddhist clergy treated the Soviet regime and the ideas of renovationism negatively. Lamas of the Tsongol and Tsygol datsans took the most conservative positions.

Independently from the renovationists, the ideas of Buddhist reforms were proposed by the so-called *"nirvanists"* headed by E Vambotsyrenov and the *Balagat* movement headed by L-S Tsydenov.

L-S Tsydenov

Lubsan-Sandan Tsydenov was born in 1851 in a place called Shana two or three kilometres from Kizhinga, the son of Lama Tsyden Baltuev. Like most Buryat boys, at the age of six he was sent as a disciple to the Kizhinga temple where he received a solid primary monastery education. He continued his education at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Tamchinskii (Gusinoozerskii) *datsan*, where he earned a degree of *gebshi.* Upon his return to the Kizhinga datsan Tsydenov continued his education and soon earned the degree of *gabzhi,* studying tantra at the same time. His authority among Buddhists is confirmed by the fact that he was a member of the Buddhist clergy delegation headed by *hambo-lama* Choinzon Iroltuev that went to St Petersburg in 1894 to participate in the coronation celebrations of Nicholas II. He was included in the delegation in case of a possible dispute on Buddhism with Orientalist scholars in St Petersburg. There he met Professor A Pozdneev who, interested in his ideas, considered him a reformer of contemporary Buddhism "supporting a mystical direction on the basis of criticism of the Yellow Hat sect followers and pursuing the purposes of recreation of the classical Indian (original) Buddhism".

His task was not to provide a model of Buddhism that could consolidate the nation in the face of an alien culture's expansion, but to initiate the transmission of the Buddhist tradition into Western culture. It is in Russia that this objective of transmission of Buddhism in the West was probably first formed. Russia was in a unique position. It was the only country with a dominant Western culture in whose borders Buddhism in its traditional form had been represented for centuries.

Tsydenov strove to not limit himself to the *Gelugpa* interpretation of Tibetan Buddhism, but to interpret and use traditions of other Tibetan philosophical schools. Each of the Tibetan Buddhist schools offers its own version of the teaching. The form of its rendition was developed for centuries, adapting itself to the sociocultural, political and economic realities in which these schools existed. By the late eighteenth century territorial and administrative spheres of influence of these schools were finally settled and they started to develop independently, getting more and more isolated from one another. A gradual diminishing of polemics on theoretical questions among those schools was a negative consequence of such isolationism. On the contrary, the scholastic element in the dogmas significantly grew and this led to certain narrowness in the training of disciples and a decrease of the schools' creative potential in general. The leading representatives of the schools understood this rather well. In the nineteenth century a "non-school" direction named *rime* appeared as a reaction to this.

Tsydenov developed such an approach in Buryatia. Unlike the renovationists, who tried to reduce the contents of Buddhism to some philosophical-ethnic kernel that would be adapted for understanding of the masses, leading to inevitable superficiality, he set his goal as the maximum use of the theoretical and practical potential of Tibetan Buddhism. He gathered the heritage of not only *Gelugpa* but other main schools, such as *Ningmapa*, *Kagyupa*, *Shizhedpa* and *Sakyapa*. The *Ningmapa* school was not widely practiced in Buryatia, but in neighboring Tuva this tradition was quite broadly represented. *Dzogchen* teaching is the theoretical basis of this religious practice. It was formed in Tibet by a well-known philosopher and yogi, Lonchenpa (Natsog-Randol), who left a multi-volume collection of his works. Tsydenov's disciple and associate, Agvan Silnam Dorzhi (D. Badmaev), translated his concluding work "Karnatantra", which combined *dzogchen* and *mahamudra* teachings, into Buryat.

Mahamudra teaching belonging to the traditions of *Kagyu* and *Shizhed* was also introduced into practice. Before the establishment of *Gelugpa* as the dominant school, *Kagyupa* was quite widely spread in Mongolia. The main practice of *Shizhedpa (chod)* is present in Mongolia and Buryatia nowadays. The only teaching unavailable in Buryatia at that time was the *Zhedorzhe* (*Hevadzhra*) system belonging to the *anuttatatantra* of the *Sakyapa* school. This absence is explained by the fact that the transfer of this *Idam* was prohibited in the *Gelug* tradition and those rare Yellow Hat sect members that practiced it usually received consecration from *Sakya* teachers, but did not transfer it to their tradition. This rule was rather strict in Tibet, but there were exceptions in the periphery of the *Gelugpa* world, for example, in China. Agvan Silnam was sent to China and received the *Zhedorzhe* tradition from Chzhanchzha-hutuhta in Peking, together with the complete library on this system. Until the 1880s, when Sakya school teaching became more available in Russia through Tibetan teachers, this collection was the only available literature on this teaching in our country. Agvan Silnam consecrated Tsydenov and a narrow circle of closest disciples, which gave a start to its spread in Russia.

In the practical implementation of this teaching, Tsydenov accentuated the necessity of intensive and prolonged yoga practice in seclusion. This priority, not the organization of everyday life of the monks in accordance to Vinaya code, that occurred with the renovationists.

Tsydenov was not satisfied with the way of life of contemporary *datsans* as much time was given to administrative-economic activity and everyday ritual services and little, if any, was devoted to meditative practice. Unlike Tibet, hermit monasteries were not widespread in Buryatia.

Tsydenov and his closest disciple Agvan-Silnam broke with the lamas of the Kizhinga *datsan* and settled together with their followers in the taiga (boreal forest) on a slope of Kudun mountain range. Tsydenov strove to restore the strictness of the rules of practical Buddhism and the intensity of spiritual practice from the times of the Indian *Mahasiddha* yogis. In the life of his sangha he revived the principles of direct supervision of a teacher over a disciple. He thought that in the changing life-conditions in the coming twentieth century the monastery form of teaching would be non-viable. He shifted to non-traditional kinds of *Gelugpa* practice that in reality corresponded to earlier periods of Buddhist tradition. Tsydenov established the non-school rules of sangha organization that would help the teaching to endure in the future. Together with his disciples Tsydenov spent over twenty years in meditative practice. This retreat, however, was disturbed by the Russian Civil War. In late August 1918, Ataman Semenov, formerly a member of the Provisional Government, seized power in Transbaikalia.

In this way Tsydenov restored the "hermit-type" monasteries that Buryat Buddhism lacked. A great number of his followers left *datsans* to practice the Vajrayana in the wide world. Later, during the destruction of the monastery system, this allowed saving not only the teaching but also its practical realization. The tradition of Tsydenov was grasped and developed in neo-Buddhism by BD Dandaron.

Tsydenov distanced himself as far as possible from secular power up to the declaration of state sovereignty of territories under his spiritual guardianship. This step was provoked by the attempts to conscript Buryats, undertaken by the warring parties.

The Balagat Movement in Transbaikalia in the 1920s

In the Russian Empire the Buryats were not conscripted. However, the Buryat clans ascribed to Cossacks participated in border defense. During the Russian Civil War, when Transbaikalia was under Ataman Semenov's dictatorship, the Buryat People's Duma (Burnarduma) declared conscription of Buryats into the ranks of the Mongolian-Buryat brigade, Zorikto-Bator, of the army. The decree about the conscription of Buryat males born between 1895 and 1898 was published on January 23, 1919. Buddhist Tungus were conscripted alongside the Buryats. This decision was passed by the Buryat People's Duma in the course of the implementation of the Decree of All-Buryat Convention taking place in November 1918 regarding the conscription of 2,000 men from the Aginskii, Selenginskii, Khorinskii and Barguzinskii districts.

The decree concerning the conscription of the Buryats displeased the population. Indeed the Buryats sabotaged the conscription. In the spring of 1919 the confrontation intensified. Believers refused to send their sons to the army. When the opposition strengthened further and a stage of repression was nearly reached on the part of the Semenovites, people's representatives appealed to Tsydenov, presented him with a "mandal-petition", and asked his advice on how to avoid conscription. He expressed the opinion that the best method would be the creation of an independent state, then Ataman Semenov would be forced to show the Buryat population some respect. The people took his words as a wake-up call. Preparations for the creation of a constituent assembly started and delegates were elected at county conventions. At the same time a commission to develop the principal law of the projected state started work. Its members were named *harliks*. The overwhelming majority of the population of Kodun-Kizhinga valley and some other places, such as Ulgurga and Bulum, expressed a wish to become *harliks*. These events were taking place in the spring of 1919 when the local authorities of Semenov's power (*somons and hoshuns*) functioned.

A written petition to "accept the population under his patronage" sent to Tsydenov was compiled in February 1919 by representatives of the Kizhinga Credit Union. In May 1919 the Constituent Assembly (named "Great") was held, attended by 102 delegates, and the creation of a theocratic state was proclaimed. Its Khan-Lama became Tsydenov and other authorities were elected too. The manifesto regarding the foundation of a theocratic state headed by Tsydenov was published nationwide. This document was handed to the representatives of relevant authorities, first of all to Ataman Semenov. The government of the theocratic state informed Semenov that the state was created by the will of the people for their protection and would not discriminate others.

In the decree of the Constituent Assembly it was stated: "By virtue of the right of freedom given to us we decreed to leave the power of the People's Duma administration, *aimak* administrations, *hoshun* and *somon*, whose actions are directed specifically toward the military purpose totally contrary and discriminative to our religious and civic consciousness and to enter the authority of the almighty Darma-Ranzyn-Khan." The principal law (constitution) included thirty-six articles on the theocratic state, the Great Suglaan, the government, court, and law enforcement.

The theocrats rejected the authority of the Buryat People's Duma. It was declared that the *somon* and *hoshun* administrations were to be abolished. The Constituent Assembly resolved to henceforth name the somons *toskhons* and hoshuns *balagads*. Therefore this movement is often referred to as the "Balagat" movement. Eleven theocratic communities formed the theocratic state: Kodun, Chelsanai, Kizhinga-gol, Ulan-Burgasa, Tsagan-nor, Sarantui, Orod-gol, Mogsohon, Chesano-gol, Ehe-bulak, and Kulhison. The total territory included the valleys of Chesan, Kodun and Kizhinga, and partially territories of today's Khorinsk and Eravna districts. A characteristic feature of this state was a total absence of any police or military forces. The location of Sandan Tsydenov's cell was declared a capital of the theocratic state under the name of "Soemp-kus."

Leaders of the Buryat People's Duma initially hoped to do away with the theocratic movement peacefully. To that end, they twice sent their representatives to the theocrats. However, members of the theocratic government refused point-blank to hold negotiations declaring that they would not submit to any power except the power of Khan-Tsar Sandan Tsydenov. The Buryat People's Duma had no armed forced of its own, but Ataman Semenov helped by sending a company of Cossacks. The head of the theocratic state and his ministers and other members of administration were arrested and sent to Verkhenudinsk prison.

Due to a great famine that spread in the Volga region and other parts of Russia in 1921-1922, on February 2, 1922, the Soviet power issued a decree "On the Forcible Confiscation of Church Valuables for the Help to the Starving". Though the issue of this decree's implementation was not raised by the authorities in Buryatia, practically all *datsans* gathered donations to help the starving people. On the initiative of the renovationists in 1922 and 1925 Buddhist conventions were held in Buryatia. At the convention that took place on October 15, 1922, a spiritual council was elected headed by the *hambo-lama*. Temple councils were established in the *datsans*. In them decisions were made by a majority vote and laymen could take part in the discussions of religious questions.

At the convention Agvan Dorzhiev proposed to lamas to abandon private property and pass all *datsan* property to the community so that it would become collective property. The renovationists strove to demonstrate the ideological compatibility of Buddhism and socialism. At the 1922 convention they failed to pass a statute and a charter fully corresponding to the existing legislation. In 1925 the Commission to Study the Legal Position of the Buddhist Sangha of the Buryat Regional Communist Party Committee abolished the charter and statute passed at the 1922 convention. The Central Executive Committee and the Soviet of the People's Commissars of the Buryat-Mongolian ASSR passed Decree 221 on December 17, 1925, "On the Separation of Buddhist Lamaist Church from the State". In order to bring the statute and charter of the Buddhist Sangha into conformity with the passed decree, the Second Convention of Buddhists was held from December 20-31, 1925. At this convention representatives of the renovationists prevailed (fifty-two delegates vs. fourteen opposing conservatives). The drive of its organizers for a "creation of a religious association based on the pure teaching of the Buddha, which will not contradict the laws of the Soviet Socialist republic" is reflected in the documents passed by the convention.

In January 1927, the All-Union Convention of Buddhists of the USSR convened in Moscow. The convention formed the Mission of Buddhist Clergy in the

USSR, later renamed the All-Union Spiritual Buddhist Administration, the residence of which was at the Buddhist temple in Leningrad. In his speech at the convention Agvan Dorzhiev tried to show the ideological proximity of the main Buddhist and Marxist principles. The authorities, who at first welcomed the desire of Buddhists to cooperate with them, later changed their policy to the utmost violation of rights of the Buddhist church and open repression against the clergy. Using his diplomatic status of a plenipotentiary representative of Tibet in the USSR, Agvan Dorzhiev attempted to address the Permanent Commission on Cults of the Presidium of the All-Union Central Executive Committee, specifically the Chairman MI Kalinin, with statements and petitions about the position of Buddhists in Buryatia and other Buddhist regions of the USSR, but all his pleas remained unanswered.

In the late 1930s not a single open *datsan* remained out of the former forty-six in Buryatia. Many lamas and active believers were repressed or killed, while many emigrated. The Buddhist sangha of Buryatia practically ceased to exist. During the Second World War the attitude to religion significantly changed. In 1944 the Council on the Religious Cults' Affairs was formed in the Council of Ministers of the USSR. A few lamas that avoided imprisonment wrote a letter to Joseph Stalin with a plea to reopen some Buddhist temples. In 1946 a Buddhist meeting was convened, during which the Statute on Buddhist clergy in the USSR was passed. In the same year the Ivolginskii *datsans*, the residence of the Central Spiritual Buddhist Administration of the USSR was founded and the Aginskii datsans was restored in the Buryat national autonomous *okrug* of the Chita region.

Despite temporary liberalization during the wartime period, the policy of the Communist party and Soviet state toward religion generally remained irreconcilable. In the Tuvinian People's Republic, before its incorporation into the USSR in 1944, there were about thirty temples. By the end of the 1940s none of them survived. In 1959 a large-scale anti-religious campaign started in the USSR. In 1965 the Council on the Religious Cults' Affairs was transformed into the Councils of the Religious Affairs at the Council of Ministers of the USSR. In general, control over religious associations of all confessions was gaining strength and religion was regarded as something alien to the regime and as an ideologically harmful social phenomenon doomed to die out in the near future. Therefore, the postwar revival of Buddhism was largely limited. The training of Buddhist clergy was resumed in Mongolia, and international ties through the Global Buddhist Brotherhood and Asian Buddhist Peace Conference were established. Prominent foreign Buddhist leaders including the Dalai Lama visited the Ivolginskii Buddhist temple. Alongside it, however, repressions against individual representatives of Buddhist intelligentsia continued (for example the "Dandaron affair" in 1972).

BD Dandaron

BD Dandaron (1914–1974) was a well-known Russian Orientalist, Buddologist, Tibetologist and clergyman. He was born in Kizhinga and received a traditional Buddhist education from his father, a religious poet and philosopher, Lama Agvan Silnam Tuzol Dorzhi Shob (Badmaev) and other Lamas in a monastery. A disciple of the aforementioned Yoga Lubsan-Sandan Tsydenov, founder of the Balagat movement, Dandaron was proclaimed his successor in 1920. In 1936 he entered the Leningrad Institute of Aviation Equipment, at the same time studying the Tibetan language in the Oriental Department of Leningrad State University and with Agvan Dorzhiev. In 1937 he was arrested on a false accusation and sentenced to death by firing squad, later changed to a twenty-five-year term in labour camps. Dandaron was among the authors of a letter addressed to Joseph Stalin with the plea to assist the revival of Buddhist temples (*datsans*) in Buryatia. From 1957 to 1972 he was a research fellow at the Buryat Institute of Social Sciences (currently the Institute of Mongolian, Buddhist and Tibetan Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences). His main work entitled "Thoughts of a Buddhist" was characterized by specialists as "a philosophical encyclopedia for Europeans" after it was published posthumously. In 1972 Dandaron was arrested for the third time on an accusation of his "anti-Soviet" religious activity. He died as a prisoner in a settlement of Vydrino in 1974. In a labour camp he wrote "The Black Notebook", a philosophical work reflecting Buddhist ideas about the contemporary world.

As a philosopher, Dandaron was, until comparatively recently, known only to a few specialists who had the opportunity to read the manuscripts of his unpublished articles and "Thoughts of a Buddhist", his main work. In 1997, however, "Thoughts of a Buddhist" and "The Black Notebook" were published in a prestigious edition entitled *Russian Philosophers of the Twentieth Century*. This can be considered an "official" recognition of the original philosophical heritage of the Buddhist thinker and the beginning of an acquaintance of the general public with the works of BD Dandaron.

The first systematic philosophical work by Dandaron entitled "Neo-Buddhism" was, apparently, written while in prison. The pseudonym "Zidabazar" was used, which was a Buryatized form of Sanskrit *Cittavajra*, a second name of Dandaron's received during the initiation ceremony from his teacher. The fate of this manuscript is unknown, but in his letters to NYu. Kovrigina (Klimanskene), Dandaron presented the general idea and an outline of Neo-Buddhism.

For Dandaron the philosophical concepts are meaningful only as approaches to practice. At the same time, the constant development of the world should be viewed as inseparable from the process of perfection of personality and consciousness of the practicing person.

The Contemporary Position of Buddhism in Russia

On January 18, 1989, a Convention of Buddhist Communities was held in Moscow. At the convention the All-Russian Association of Buddhist Communities "The Spiritual Buddhist Administration" was established. According to its creators, this association was to replace the Central Spiritual Buddhist Administration and serve as the main coordinating centre for all Buddhists of Russia. However, the Spiritual Buddhist Administration never received universal recognition. In 1992 as the USSR collapsed, the Central Spiritual Buddhist Administration ceased to exist as the principal authority of all Buddhists of the already nonexistent country.

A number of Buddhist communities belonging to different movements appeared in such Siberian cities as Kemerovo, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Irkutsk, Khabarovsk and others. About ten Buddhist communities were registered in Tyva. A *huree* (temple) named Tuvdan Choihorling, a few *dugans* (worship houses) and a Dharma-centre were opened in Kyzyl. In the Altai Republic there is the Gorno-Altaiskoe Buddhist religious association Ak-Burkha. At present a few Buddhist communities are officially registered in many large cities of Russia, primarily Moscow and St Petersburg, but there is still no single coordinating authority uniting all Buddhists of Russia. Separate large Buddhist associations of Buryat, Kalmyk and Tuvinian Buddhists maintain relations with foreign Buddhists and participate in international Buddhist organizations.

It should also be noted that at present the role of traditional monasteries in Buddhism has probably diminished somewhat in comparison with the previous period from the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. Cultural Buddhist centres, which formally are not religions organizations, nowadays perform the functions of classical monasteries (teaching, publishing and dissemination of canonical literature). Thus, in considering a classical Buddhist monastery as the main keeper of the traditional Buddhist way of life, one should note the growing influence of a large number of secular Buddhist organizations and numerous laymen associations.

On the one hand, the absence of a single coordinating organization representing the interests of all Russia's Buddhists contributes to manifestations of greater freedom in religious ceremonies for certain associations of believers. The critics of the Central Spiritual Buddhist Administration paid attention to these facts. On the other hand, the absence of such a central all-Russian coordinating organization complicates an inevitable and necessary dialogue between the confession's representatives and authorities, and significantly decreases the possibilities of successful representation of Russian Buddhists in different international organizations. In general, this situation diminishes the ability of Russian Buddhists' representatives to play a constitutive role in the spiritual and cultural life of contemporary Russian society.

According to its Constitution, the Russian secular state considers Buddhism one of Russia's traditional religions. The state renders assistance to Buddhist organizations in the restoration of monasteries, and the return of items of religious importance and other valuables preserved in state repositories. Within the Russian Academy of Sciences there is the Institute of Mongolian, Buddhist and Tibetan Studies (Ulan-Ude). The study of Buddhist culture, philosophy and history is one of its responsibilities. Russian leaders attend the largest Buddhist monasteries during their visits to traditionally Buddhist regions of the country. Representatives of Buddhist clergy are invited to meetings of the State Council. (They are members of the Public Chamber, a consultative body). Buddhists in Russia are fewer than the representatives of Christianity and Islam, but among them there is a high proportion of youth and intelligentsia not only from traditional Buddhist regions. Nowadays Buddhist communities exist practically in all large Russian cities. The Buddhists of Russia, who survived the unprecedented years of terror and managed to preserve their religious values and culture, demonstrate good adaptation capabilities in the changing world during the globalization era. They have positive perspectives for further development and dissemination of the Dharma northward and westward.

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Buddhism in Mongolia

SY Lepekhov

Introduction

This essay provides a thorough overview of the history of Buddhism in Mongolia beginning with the two principles of secular and spiritual power intertwined in the initial concept of the dissemination of Buddhism in the country. These principles were reflected in all Buddhist activity in Mongolia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including the translation of canonical Buddhist texts used to legitimatize the power of secular kagans. This essay also surveys the lives and philosophical and historiographical concepts of prominent Mongolian Buddhist figures such as Gushi Tsorji, Danzanrabja, Agvanbaldan, and others. Attention is also focused on the development of Mongolian Buddhist institutions during and after the fall of the Qing dynasty and the fate of the Buddhist faith during the years of Communism. The essay ends with the description of the post-socialist revival of Buddhism in Mongolia.

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The initial spread of Buddhism in Mongolia took place in the reign of the first Great Kagans – Ogodei (1186-1241), Qubilai Khan and Möngke (1207-1258). A meeting which took place in 1253 in Shan-du between the prior of the Sakya monastery, the leader of the Sakya philosophical school Pagba-lama, and Qubilai-kagan, played an important role in the history of Buddhism's penetration into Mongolia and acquisition of the status of state religion. In the course of that meeting an issue about the vassalage of Tibet to the Mongolian Empire was settled. Also, for the first time the famous "two principles" of the Mongolian kagan's state policy were formulated and written down in two documents entitled "The Pearl Charter" and "The Tibetan Charter." The essence of these two principles, as it appears from the charters, was that state power should rest upon two fundamentals that should support one another: secular (the kagan's power) and spiritual (Dharma). "The Pearl Charter" was essentially a decree by Qubilai that ended with a reference to the participation in its compilation of Pagba-lama, who was defined as "the boat of Buddha's Dharma, the transportation outside the sea of samsara." In the numerous "Admonitions" by Pagba-lama written directly after the meeting with Qubilai, as well as in the development of the "two principles" idea, the theory of Śunyata was used as a theoretical philosophical foundation of state ideology.

In the sixteenth century, the Mongolian khans Altan-khan of the Tumets (1507-1583), Abadai Sain-khan of the Khalkha (1554-1586) and Setsen-khan of Ordos (1540-1586), began to support the hierarchs of the Gelugpa School. In 1576, close to Lake Kukunor, a convention of various Mongolian tribes took place. The Gelugpa hierarch, Sodnam-Jamtso (1543-1586), was invited. In 1578, Altan-khan awarded him the title of "Dalai Lama Vajra-Dhara." Since that time Gelugpa teaching started to spread far and wide as the main Buddhist teaching in Mongolia, and the institution of Dalai Lamas as supreme spiritual and secular rulers emerged in Tibet. Sodnam-Jamtso was considered the third Dalai Lama because the count started with Gedundub. In the late sixteenth century the revival of Mongolian Buddhism commenced following the period of decline during the reign of Togon-Temur and his successors. It is possible to note a certain correlation between theoretical efforts to unify philosophical propositions of Madhyamaka and Vijnyanavada and unification intentions in the political practice of the Gelugpa hierarchs.

The first translations of Buddhist canonical texts into Mongolian appeared during that period. However, the flourishing of translation activities came in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Neiji-toin (1557-1634) was a prominent disseminator of Mahayana philosophical ideas in Mongolia. During the reign of Ligden-khan of the Chakhars (1594-1634), the translation and editing of the Mongolian *Ganjur* took place in 1628-1629 by a group of translators headed by Kungi-Odze. The first officially recognized translations of a chapter from *Prajnaparamita* are related to an earlier period, directly connected with the activity of the third Dalai Lama Sodnom-Jamtso and Altan-kagan. It was they who initiated the revival in Mongolia of the concept of "the two principles of power," developed by the Pagba-lama in the Sakya monastery during the epoch of Qubilai.

The purpose of the revival of these principles during the epoch of feudal disunity and decline of Buddhism in Mongolia was to acquire an ideological and political foundation for the consolidation of the country and concentration of power in the hands of one ruler. It was this goal that Altan-kagan strove for by declaring his adherence to the Gelugpa teaching and accepting the title of "the Tsar of Cakravartin rotating a thousand wheels" from the third Dalai Lama. The main Buddhist text that Altan-kagan used as the ideological and sacral foundation of his power was *Suvarnaprabhasottama Raja-sutra* ("Altan gerel-tu" in Mongolian), also named "The Golden Glitter." The "Altan gerel-tu" sutra was translated three years after the meeting of Altan-kagan with the third Dalai Lama. Its popularity in most countries where Mahayana Buddhism was practiced is also explained by the fact that it is considered a sermon addressed to secular rulers. It is otherwise known as "the teaching for kings" or "Raja-shastra." "Altan gerel-tu" is, in a sense, a compendium of the Mahayana teaching. The main ideas set forth are a part of the general Mahayana philosophy and soteriology. The similarity between the name of the sutra and the name of the Kagan played an important role in the preference of this sutra over the *Saddharma-pundarika* or any other text. According to Altan-kagan's logic this fact pointed to his sacral exclusiveness, his charisma and special rights to become a unifier of Mongolia, and to bend the other khans to his will. Thereby, the sutra provided patronage to Altan-kagan.

The theoretical contents of the sutra led to the affirmation and development of a thesis about the identity of nirvana and samsara. The proof boiled down to the substantiation of "tathata" identity ("real suchness" or absolute reality) and all other possible levels of being. The explanation is that in the nature of "all dharmas" and the nature of nirvana it is not possible to find any differences. Since "Dharmakaya" has no attributes, i.e. it is "empty" – *shunya* – and thus it is called nirvana; the essence of emptiness is real "Dharmakaya." Knowledge of it is enlightenment, the supreme knowledge.

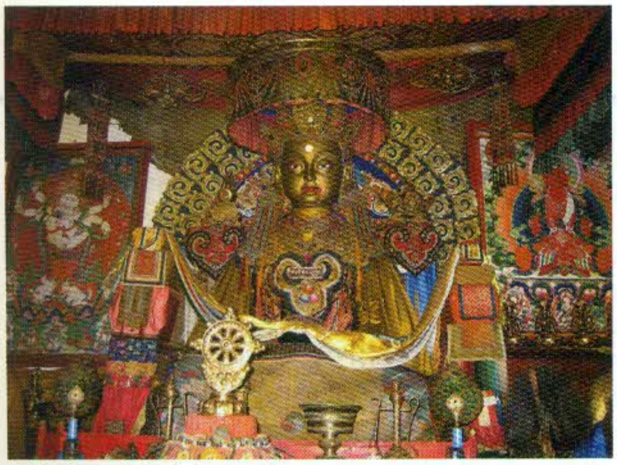
The sutra also states the concept of the "Bodhisattva's way", its ten steps, and describes its relevant parameters. The "two laws" or "two principles" of administration in Mongolian Buddhist political tradition were a social-philosophical rethinking of the "two truths" theory developed by the Madhyamiks. All these theoretical questions are discussed more thoroughly and evidentially in the *Prajnaparamita* texts.

The translation of the *Prajnaparamita* into Mongolian was a primary task that would solve the future development of Buddhism in Mongolia. This important task was assigned to a personal disciple of the Dalai Lama, Sodnom Jamtso Pandita from Huh-Hoto Mandjushri Gushi Shiregtu Tsorjiv (Tsorji) Shrishilasvarab. Gushi Tsorji was an influential figure in the entourage of the Dalai Lama. It is known that he accompanied the Dalai Lama when His Holiness visited Altan-kagan in 1579. A close relationship prevailed between Pandita Gushi Tsorjiv and Tsogttaidji. On the latter's order Gushi Tsorjiv translated Milaraiba's Namtar. As a personal representative of the Dalai Lama he came to Khalkha to visit the Abadai-kagan who awarded him the title of "shiregetu pandita gushi tsorji" or "throne sage, state mentor, lord of faith" and made him the very first lama (*upadyaya*). He is believed to be a founder of the Erdeni-Zuu monastery.

The translations of the *Prajnaparamita* by Gushi Tsorji are of specific interest as many of them have colophons that represent the first essays on the country's history in Mongolian Buddhist historiography. So in the colophon of his translation of the *Shatasahacrika Prajnaparamita-sutra,* Gushi Tsorji gave the history of Buddhist dissemination from the time of Genghis Khan, who he declared a reincarnation of Hurmusda, the king of all Tengri in a "great northern country." After subjugating the enemies that Gushi Tsorji primarily considered as enemies of faith, Genghis Khan created a great state. The foundation he laid was based on the "two principles policy." Kagans, Genghis Khan's heirs, continued the policy of disseminating Buddhism. However, when

Erdene Zuu Monastery Mongolia

Tarniyn Xiyd Buddhist Temple-Mongolia



Buddha Statue in the Erdene Zuu Monastery

"unholy khans" replaced them, "nightly darkness" fell upon Mongolia in Gushi Tsorji's words. The revival of the Holy Teaching came with Altan-kagan, whom Gushi Tsorji called the "Tsar of Teaching (Dharma-raja)."

This peculiar historiographical tradition of Gushi Tsorji was continued by a Tibetan translator Sakya (*Saja* in Mongolian) Donduv in the colophon to Padmasambhava's Namtar *Badmagatan*. According to it, dissemination of Buddhism in Mongolia started in the times of Qubilai and Pagba-lama. For ten generations the Teaching was developed. Donduv specifically mentions that during the reign of Hunagu-kagan, Choiji-Odser translated many books on Prajnaparamita, sutra and tantra. Then, after Togon-Temur, due to the negligence and sinfulness of unholy rulers, the religion was forgotten until Altan-kagan revived it again. Like Gushi Tsorji, Sakya Donduv specifically mentioned the translation of *Prajnaparamita* texts as an important stage in the dissemination of Buddhism in general.

After the death of Dalai Lama Sodnam-Jamtso in 1588, a Mongol named Yondan-Jamtso (1589-1616) was recognized as his reincarnation and became the fourth Dalai Lama.

The Khalkha khans tried to maintain the position of the Bogdo-gegens (the official title "Rje btsun dam pa Khutukhtus") similar to that of the Dalai Lamas in Tibet. There were eight Bogdo-gegens in Mongolia, but only two were Mongols, the rest Tibetans. The first, Rje btsun dam pa Khutukhtus Zanabazar (Öndür Gegen, 1635-1724), son of Tushetu-khan Gombodorj, was recognized as a reincarnation of a well-known Tibetan scholar and historian,Taranatkha. Not only was he an authority on Buddhist philosophy, but also a renowned sculptor and artist. In the 1720s, after the death of Öndür Gegen, the Manchurian emperor ordered a monastery to be built

Gildrd Stupa-prajanparamita Mongolia 18 th Century CE

named Amur-Bayashalantu on the Iben-gol River to serve as a mausoleum.

The first Mongolian monastery, Erdeni-Zuu, was built in 1686-1687 by Abatai-khan close to the ancient capital Hara-Horin (Karakorum). From the very beginning it was created as the main residence of the Gelugpa School, whose teaching began to be perceived as the official ideology of the Mongolian state as it was theocratized. In 1838, the fifth Rje btsun dam pa Khutukhtus built a monastery named Gandan-Tekchinling that was to become the largest of Mongolia's 747 monasteries by the early twentieth century.

With the ascent of the Manchurian Qing dynasty, which continued supporting Buddhism, xylographic publishing of Mongolian *Ganjur* was carried out during the reign of Kangxi. The manuscript translation made during the reign of Ligden-kagan was the basis of this edition.

The essence of editing the Mongolian translation during the times of Ligden-kagan, and later under Kangxi, was the reconsideration of colophons, since it was in the *Ganjur* colophons that most of Mongolia's written history, consecrated by the authority of canonical Buddhist texts, was contained. So Ligden-kagan's translators did their best to erase all mention of Altan-kagan and his role in the revival of Buddhism in Mongolia, assigning all credit to Ligden-kagan.

It is possible that by publishing the xylograph of the Mongolian *Ganjur* the Manchu emperor understood that in this way he could better control information preserved in written Buddhist monuments, and that it was important for his historical-political concept. This explains the presence of significant differences in the colophons of handwritten and xylographic editions. Printed *Ganjur* sutras were usually supplemented with only a short colophon by Tibetan translators, while in handwritten editions there was often an interesting Mongolian colophon. That is why handwritten texts were valued more than xylographs in Mongolia. In addition, they were an important source of information and preserved historiographical data on medieval Mongolian history.

The historical chronicle *Altan Tobchi* ("The Golden Arch") created under the supervision of Luvsandanzan (Sumadishashanadhara), who lived in the second half of the seventeenth century and first half of the eighteenth century, continued the Buddhist historiographical tradition started by Gushi Tsorji and Donduv-toin. The value of this chronicle is that during its creation, Mongolian sources of the twelfth-thirteenth centuries were used that have not otherwise survived. In the course of its creation, Luvsandanzan followed the Indo-Tibetocentric concept according to which Mongolian history was a part of the history of the entire Buddhist world. Under Emperor Gao-zun the *Heipi zhunnei* terminological dictionary was published. It played a significant role in the dissemination of Buddhist philosophical knowledge in Mongolia. In the foreword it is said that "this emperor was the first of the Manchurian emperors who perceived the deep philosophy of the Madhyamiks." The translators and commentators Choiji-Odser, Oirat zaya-pandita Namhaijamts Zanabazar, Khalkha zaya-pandita Luvsantserenle (1642-1717), sumba-hambo Ishbaljir (1704-1788), Luvsandagva-darja (1734-1803), tsahar-gebji Luvsanchultem (Sumatshilabhadra, 1740-1830), hamba-nomun-khan Agvanhaidav (1779-1838), tsorj-gabji Agvanbal-dan (1797-1864), agramba Dandar from Chin-van hoshun of Tusheg-khan's aimak (1835-1915), harchin-hamba Jamyan-garva, tsorji Agvantseren, bragbi-endon Demchigdorj, lama-gegen Tseven-javtsag (eighteenth century), lama-gabji Luvsanbaldan, gabji Danzanchoinzod (nineteenth century), Tsembel-gush, and gabji Luvsandamdin (early twentieth century). were experts on Prajnaparamita and Madhyamaka [Gantuya, Tsogtsaihan, 1995, p. 137-138].

Ideas of Prajnaparamita and Madhyamaka can clearly be traced to the works of an original Mongolian Buddhist thinker, Dulduita Danzanrabja (1803-1856), who joined the reformation movement in Mongolia in the first half of the nineteenth century. His philosophical views are, perhaps, closer to Madhyamaka, though from time to time he strives to combine them with the guidelines of Vijnanavada. He saw a fundamental beginning of everything that exists, with its deepest essence in Sunyata, which he defines (abstracting himself from all specific properties and references), as "Without exact forms, without its directions, without exact colors, without its places of stay, remarkable is this Sunyata."

Danzanrabja defines the identity of *Rupa* (form) and *Sunyata* (emptiness) in the following way, "The air of Sunyata the eternal has decorations from visibility (Rupa), all phenomena are Sunyata, just phenomena of emptiness by themselves, visibility and Sunyata are non-dualistic. There is a remarkably deep sense in it." Some of Danzanrabja's propositions point to the way he strived to unify the teachings of Madhyamaka and Vijnanavada, "These phenomena are motley and this Sunyata is universal, though they seem separate, they forever want the one thing – Vijnana." "They say Vijnana, Vijnana but there is no such Vijnana, all will come together in Sunyata."

In the late eighteenth century a "renovation" program of Mongolian Buddhism began. Under existing conditions it was practically an ideology of national enlightenment that included strengthening the role of the Mongolian language in the monasteries, the shift to Mongolian in teaching of all subjects in monastery schools, and the limitation of the power of high Lamaist clergy.

The prior of the capital monastery Gandan-Tekchinling, named Agvanhaidav (1779-1838), became a founder and a main ideologue of the renovationist movement in Mongolian Buddhism. In his treatise entitled "Worship of all Burkhans and Bodhisattvas, Invincible Heavenly Patrons", he strove to assert the values and norms of early Indian Buddhism and criticized supreme reincarnated lamas for disavowing those norms.

Original cosmological ideas were developed by the philosopher Agvanbaldan (1797-1864). In his works he generalized and critically reconsidered all previous Mongolian conceptions of the cosmos. His conclusion was that space was heterogeneous, yet it depended on the physical nature and peculiarities of material processes occurring in different places of the Universe. Another prominent figure of Mongolian enlightenment was writer Vachinbalyn Injinash (1837-1892).

After the victory of the Xinhai revolution in China in 1911, the treaties between supreme Mongolian hierarchs and Manchu Qing dynasty expired. Bogdo-gegen VIII Djebzun-Damba-hutuhta Agvan Lobsan Choiji Danzan Vanchigbal Sambu (1870-1924) became the head of the independent theocratic Mongolian state. On November 29, 1911, in the presence of the representatives of all Mongolian lands and estates, the enthronement ceremony of Bogdo-gegen VIII to the throne of the Great Khan (Bogdo-khan) of Mongolia took place in Urga. The Bogdo-khan ascended to the throne under the motto "Enthroned by many."

In 1913, the largest temple in Mongolia, with a 28-

meter high statue of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (Megjid Janraiseg), was built. This statue, cast in Dolonnor and financed by public donations, became Mongolia's symbol of independence. In the 1930s it was dismantled but in 1996 reconstructed again. It is currently located in the Gandan-Tekchinling monastery. On July 11, 1921, under the pressure of the Communists, Bogdo-gegen officially abdicated and in 1924 died of throat cancer. According to the existing tradition a new reincarnated hutuhta had to be found. However, in November 1926 the Third Great Hural of the Mongolian People's Republic passed a special resolution in which it was recommended "to abstain from inviting the Ninth Hutuhta, because no directions whatsoever are provided in the sacred texts, which is why a detailed clarification of this question in the highest echelons of Buddhist hierarchy is required." In "The Law on Separation of Religion from State" passed in 1926 it was specified that "for a search for new reincarnations of hutuhtas the permission of the government is required." However in 1928, first at the Seventh Convention of the Mongolian People's Worker's Party and then at the Fifth Great People's Hural, decisions were made that completely prohibited searching for reincarnations of Rje btsun dam pa Khutukhtus. Nevertheless, continuity of tradition was not broken and the Ninth Bogdo-gegen, born into a Tibetan family (like his predecessor) in 1932, was recognized by all leading Tibetan hierarchs, state oracles and the regent of Lhasa. At present his residence is in Dharamsala (India).

By the beginning of the twentieth century there were 747 Buddhist monasteries in Mongolia and about 100,000 monks. As a result of the consistent anti-religious policy of the Communist government of the Mongolian People's Republic, by the late 1930s there was not a single functioning Buddhist monastery in the country. Yet repressions against clergy were not as large-scale as in neighboring Buryatia, and many traditions of monastic culture were preserved. This allowed the reopening of Gandan-Tekchinling in Ulan-Bator in 1949. The Higher School of Lamas (Buddhist Spiritual Academy) was opened at this monastery in 1970. Its main task was to train Buddhist clergy for Mongolia and Russia. The Buddhist community of Mongolia is a member of the Global Brotherhood of Buddhists, and in 1969, Mongolian Buddhists joined the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace (ABCP). Its headquarters are located in Ulan-Bator, where the official press outlet of this organization – *Buddhists for Peace* journal - is published.

In 1989, the revival of Buddhism started in Mongolia. There was a Convention of Mongolian Buddhists, and the head of the community (Hambo-lama) was elected. Temples in surviving monastery buildings were reopened in Ulan-Bator, Tsetserleg, Harahorin and other large religious centers. Restoration and the reconstruction of monasteries began. Organizations like the Tibetan Foundation, the Peace Foundation of Lama Gangchen, and the Foundation for the Preservation of Mahayana Traditions (FPMT), emerged. The main purpose of the FPMT is the dissemination of authentic Tibetan Buddhism teaching in Mongolia. At the same time, new forms and methods of religious practice, nonexistent in Mongolian Buddhism before, emerged in the FPMT's activities. For example, on the basis of the restored Dara Ekh monastery near Ulan-Bator the first nunnery, Dolma Ling, was opened. Before that elderly women took vows but remained within their families. Therefore, no separate nunneries existed in Mongolia. In 2004, a center for nuns - Sutras of the Golden Glitter - was opened in Darkhan. In 2005, on the initiative of the FPMT, the Mongolian Buddhist Scout Group was founded and the Mongolian Buddhist Youth club opened. The FPMT staff conducts regular radio broadcasts. In its activity the FPMT uses modern forms of presentation of religious information and orientates itself not so much towards traditional monasteries but towards Dharma-centers in an effort to make Buddhist ideas and values more comprehensible for the youth. In general there are three tendencies in contemporary Mongolian Buddhism. They are the course towards preservation and revival of old monastery traditions; the desire to "Mongolize" Buddhism as much as possible, "cleansing" it from Tibetan influences; and the development of international "globalized" Buddhism more orientated towards western culture.

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POLAND
CZECHIA
SLOVAKIA
HUNGARY
SLOVENIA
ROMANIA
SERBIA
CROATIA
BULGARIA

Central and Eastern Europe

ESSAY 25

Buddhism in Central and Eastern Europe

Secularization and Post-Communist Transformation

Tomáš Havlíček, Helena Janů

Introduction

The area tackled by this essay involves selected countries in Central and Eastern Europe ruled by communist dictatorships until 1989; namely four states in Central Europe (Czechia, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary) and five states in Eastern or South Eastern Europe, (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria). Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is characterized by a significant process of post-communist transformation and, in some countries (Czechia, Hungary or Slovenia), also by a process of secularization of society. From the global perspective, the course and intensity of both processes are exceptional and irreproducible. One of the chief objectives of this essay is, therefore, the analysis of the development of Buddhism in the context of post-communist transformation and secularization. Since the secularization process distinctly manifests itself in Czechia, the country will serve as a model example of the relationship between Buddhism and secular society in the post-communist era.

Extensive secularization of society asserted itself in Czechia to a much greater degree than in the rest of Europe. Religious institutions, conscience and behavioural patterns lose their social significance. A shift from religious to secular control occurs. Lužný and Navrátilová (2001) state regarding the phenomenon that the basic prerequisite is dualism of power between the State and Church and the separation of sciences, which define their own fields of research without theology or interpretation of myths. The secularization process is further accelerated and sustained by authoritative regimes (communist dictatorship in the case of Czechia) which view religious communities as their adversaries. Park (1994) views secularization as follows: (a) the religious faith is put aside (a growing separation between the Church and State), (b) religious ideas are considered unimportant or rejected (decline of interest in the religious tradition and of the awareness of and respect toward the church representatives), (c) thinking and behaviour are subject to laicization and all interest in religious ideas subsides. Secularization is thus among the most apposite processes in the religious landscape not only in Czechia but in present day Europe as well.

The secularization and post-communist transformation processes interrelate with the trend of pluralisation of religions and religious communities. For example, the number of registered religious entities in Hungary between 1990 and 2005 rose thirty to almost (Török 2006). A similar trend can be observed in other post-socialist CEE countries. Unlike in Central Europe (Czechia, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland), the pluralisation of religious entities in South Eastern Europe (countries of former Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria) was not as dramatic (Table 1). This region was marked by an increase in the number of believers and a growth of social relevance of religions that can be explained as one of the consequences of the search for identity in the newly-established states after the breakup of Yugoslavia. Religion additionally played an important role in the migration of inhabitants within former Yugoslavia. Orthodox Christians, for example, became most concentrated in Serbia, Roman Catholics in Croatia, and Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Buddhism was of no great significance in this context.

This essay will nevertheless focus primarily on the origins and development of Buddhism in a secular society. In this regard, we presume that a secular and non-Christian society, i.e. in Czechia, will be more receptive to Buddhist ideas or will manifest more activities related to Buddhism than a society with markedly rooted Christianity, such as Poland or Romania. We equally assume the existence of an ever greater interconnection between Buddhist communities in Western and Eastern Europe, and between Christian Europe and Buddhist Asia.

Buddhism in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe

Institutionalization of Buddhism in CEE shows similar features to Western Europe, although with a certain delay. A significant aspect of European Buddhism is its heterogeneity and plurality (Baumann 1995). In this respect, the analysis of Buddhism in the large and heterogeneous space of the CEE appears to be highly complex and beyond the scope of this essay. The chief emphasis will thus be laid on one selected country (Czechia) which is unique from the global perspective due to its strong secularization. We assume that a more detailed analysis of the issue of Buddhism using the example of Czechia will allow for a greater focus and thus for more compact information.

In this part we would nonetheless like to present the conditions of the development of Buddhism in CEE. The entire area at hand is marked by an exceptional process of post-communist transformation. All of the selected CEE states were ruled by communist dictatorship characterized by purposeful suppression of religious manifestations on their territories which forced religiosity in society into a defensive position in the period between the post-World War Two era and 1989. This is unlike Western Europe where religion could freely develop in society. On account of this the post-communist CEE has fallen behind in terms of the progress of religious activities of traditional religions such as Christianity as well as newly established religions here presented on the example of Buddhism. CEE is not only lagging behind Western Europe but the level of development of Buddhist activities in society is much lower as to their quantity and quality (Baumann 1995).

Buddhism entered CEE in two ways. The first, older, way of introduction of Buddhist ideas and school of thought was not represented by Asian Buddhist missionaries but by European scientists of the second half of the nineteenth century occupied with the study of South and East Asia. We should name especially Eugen Burnouf, who tried to form the "prototype of the European concept of Buddhism" (Batchelor 1994), and Arthur Schopenhauer, who is considered to be the pioneer of Buddhism in Europe (Jong 1987). At this stage, the Buddhist teachings were still isolated from the social level and the Buddhist manifestations centred primarily on the study of texts rather than on social reality (Baumann 1995). The Buddhist thoughts impacted chiefly on the civic-liberal social strata (academia, doctors, artists and teachers) from which the members of Buddhist associations and communities were recruited.

The second direction is constituted by the immigration of Buddhists from Asia, chiefly from Vietnam and China, since the second half of the twentieth century, who do not have any connection to the local Buddhist activities.

In the communist era (1948-1989), a decline and loss of Buddhist philosophy and groups in society occurred. The former development was interrupted and Buddhism, like other religions, was predominantly turned into a private matter. The only exceptions were the Buddhist Mission, the Buddhist Church Arya-Maitreya-Mandala that served as an Eastern European centre of Buddhism from 1956, the Alexander Csoma de Koros International Institute for the research of Buddhism and of the principles of religious freedom in Budapest, and the group of Korean Zen (Kwan Um) in Do Am Sah in Falenica near Warsaw (Poland), which started functioning in the late 1970s.

After the collapse of the communist regimes, a sudden increase in religious thought occurred in the CEE countries, combined with the arrival and development of new or once and future religious lines of thought and movements, including Buddhism. Buddhist teachings and practices are, however, not concentrated into one strong religious stream but are marked by a distinct heterogeneity and plurality. This development will be described further regarding the example of Czechia.

The majority of Buddhist activities focus on larger cities, chiefly the metropolises of the individual states. For example, a distinguished Buddhist temple is located in the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana.

The differences between the individual CEE countries are based on smaller regional ones. Generally, the higher the level of secularization in each state, the higher the share of the population that accepts Buddhist teachings and practice (Table 1). The highest number of Buddhists from the secularized countries are registered in Czechia (10,000), Hungary (4,000) and Slovenia (over 1,000). It needs to be mentioned, however, that these numbers of Buddhist believers and their proportions in the overall populations are very small. Broadly speaking, Buddhism in the post-communist CEE countries is accepted and the major Buddhist lines of thought form part of the inter-religious dialogue but it does not exhibit such a high rate of popularity as in Western Europe.

For example, in traditionally strong Catholic Poland, Buddhist philosophy in the early 1900s was pursued only by small circles of liberal intellectuals. The upswing of a large number of different Buddhist schools in Polish society occurred only after the fall of the communist regime, although Buddhism was successfully institutionalized in Poland even during the totalitarian period, as noted above. The growth of Buddhism in the wake of 1989 was similarly dynamic in the other CEE countries, which is documented by the opening of a Buddhist library by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Szczecin, Poland, in 2000.

Slovenia, which gained independence only in 1991, is characterized by a higher degree of secularization and also a larger share of Buddhists (0.05 %) in the

Osrodek Khowdong Darnkow poland

Won Kwang Sa Esztergom zen outer Hungary

population. It shows a true development of Buddhist ideas in the society only after 1995, the year when the first Buddhist society, Buddha-Dharma, was registered. But the most notable Buddhist community is the Dharmaling congregation, represented also by the Tibetan Buddhist Lama Shenphen Rinpoche (born in 1969). Apart from Dharmaling, roughly ten other Buddhist groups are active in Slovenia.

In Serbia, a traditionally religious country, the approximate number of Buddhists is estimated to be 1,000. The members are concentrated in four cities: Beograd, Novi Sad, Subotica and Zrenjanin.

As in Serbia, Buddhism started to develop in Croatia only after the proclamation of independence of the state in 1991. In 1992, the first Buddhist society named Dharmaloka became established in the capital Zagreb. It currently remains the only state-registered Buddhist religious society in the country. Dharmaloka has several branches in other cities and it joined the European Buddhist Union in 1993. Buddhist movements of Japanese and Korean Zen, and of the Tibetan strain of Buddhism are also active in the country.

In Bulgaria and Romania, Buddhism is mostly practiced by the Vietnamese or Chinese communities whose members were coming to Eastern Europe during communism (after 1948). Since these states are marked by a deeply-rooted Christian tradition, the total share of Buddhists is relatively low (Table 1).

Table 1: Religiosity and Buddhism in selected countries of Central and Eastern Europe

Country (2007)	Population (mil)	Religiosity (%)	Buddhists (total)	Buddhists (%)
Czechia	10.2	29	10000	0.1
Slovakia	5.3	83	1000	0.02
Poland	39	89	2000	0.005
Hungary	10.1	52	4000	0.04
Slovenia	2	64	1000	0.05
Croatia	4.5	87	1000	0.02
Serbia	7.8	90	1000	0.01
Romania	22	96	2000	0.01
Bulgaria	7.5	95	1000	0.01

Source: World Christian Database 2010 (modified by authors) and Zulehner, Tomka 2008.

The development of Buddhism in the CEE countries shows similar characteristics but the highest number of adherents to Buddhism was observed in the most secularized country from the region, namely Czechia. The development of Buddhism shall be analysed further as an example for the entire CEE region.

Buddhism in a Model Secular Country: Czechia

Initial period (1850-1948)

The European wave of interest in Eastern philosophies in the early 1800s immediately affected the present Czech territory. Several translations of Buddhist texts and studies appeared, particularly the texts of the Pali Canon of the Theravada tradition. They served as inspiration for philosophers and artists. The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) pursued the thoughts of the insatiable mind, the reincarnation theory and the possibility of liberation from the cycle of suffering. Others were soon to follow in his tracks. Buddhist societies cropped up thanks to the available intellectual resources (the initial society in Germany in 1903) and the first European Buddhists emerged. Lenoir (2002, p. 68) notes: "The escape to the Orient formed part of the rebellion against the Western rationalism and mass introduction of machines into production. German romanticists initiated it at the onset of the nineteenth century and it would be (until the present day) repeatedly exhorted by an ever-increasing number of people following in their footsteps in the West rejecting the scientific and materialistic form of society or its technological capitalistic model. Buddhism, with which the European public became familiar thanks to translations and professional papers, was to become the subject of passionate interest with European intellectuals and it was to elicit countless arguments for the entire second half of the nineteenth century."

Starting from 1850, the curriculum of the German Faculty of Arts at Charles University came to include Sanskrit and Pali. The educational dictionary *Slovník naučný* composed by FL Rieger was published in 1874. It contains headwords such as *Buddha, Buddhism, Buddhist philosophy* and *Lamaism*. In 1887, the Czech translation of *Souvenirs d'un voyage dans la Tartarie, le Thibet et la Chine pendant les années 1844, 1845 et 1846* was published. In 1916, the first Czech edition of *Sadhana: The Realisation of Life* by Rabindranath Tagore was issued by the publisher Nakladatelství J Šnajdra. This work does not dogmatically propagate any philosophic or religious teaching; it invokes Jesus and Buddha and is aware of the relation between the East and West and the requirements of secular practice and religious cognition. The book's ideas, undoubtedly influenced by the two years that the author spent studying in England, were highly inspiring to the local public. The book, as well as other of Tagore's works, was reissued several times due to their popularity.

In 1918, the year when Czechoslovakia gained independence, the stage was set for further development of Czech Indology. In 1922, the Oriental Institute was founded at the incentive of President TG Masaryk for the purpose of cultivating and establishing scientific and economic relations with the Orient. Among the first thirty-four appointed members was Vincenc Lesný (1882-1953), the founder of modern Indology and the author of the book *Buddhismus: Buddha a buddhismus pálijského kánonu*. Issued in 1921, this comprehensive publication tackled ancient Buddhism and its evolution in South Asia. It was the essential and, for a long time, the only work of its kind. In 1934, Lesný created the Indian Association at the Oriental Institute in Prague that considerably contributed to the raising of general awareness among the Czech public of the Indian culture and established contacts with distinguished personages of the Indian cultural life. One collaborator of Lesný was Otakar Pertold (1884-1965), a Hindologist and founder of Czech religious studies who first sojourned in India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) in the years 1909 and 1910. He was a fluent speaker of Sinhala and visited numerous monastery libraries in Ceylon where he became familiar with ancient texts in Pali and Sanskrit and met outstanding religious personages. He returned there a number of times and later served as an accredited diplomat in India between 1920 and 1923. He devoted his time to studying Buddhism and other Indian religions. Among the most famous propagators of Buddhism in the first half of the twentieth century was Leopold Procházka (1879-1944). He organized public lectures as early as the 1920s. He published books that he "partly experienced, partly translated, composed, provided content for and wrote" and which served as the only interpretation of the Buddha's teachings for practicing disciples for almost half a century. Apart from other publications, he also published *Buddha a jeho učení* (1926), *Kniha o skutečnosti podle Buddhova probuzenského učení* (1939) and *Buddha a Kristus: karma: buddhisticko-křesťanské pojetí* (1930), and wanted to establish the first Buddhist centre in Czechoslovakia and become a Buddhist monk in Ceylon. However, these last two objectives never came to fruition. In 1938, Martin Novosad (1908-1984) left for Ceylon and stayed there for forty-six years. He became a renowned Buddhist Theravada monk under the monastic name of Nyanasatta Thera. His writings were published in Czech only after 1990. A remarkable contribution to the dissemination of Buddhist thoughts especially in the first half of the twentieth century were provided by Czech mystics. The most distinct personage was František Drtikol (1883-1961), a photographer, painter, mystic and philosopher nicknamed the patriarch of Czech Buddhism. Before World War One he became acquainted with Eastern philosophies and engaged in daily spiritual practice of Buddhism and yoga from the early 1920s. He translated Buddhist texts which he first studied in German. The most momentous was the translation of Nagarjuna's *Madhyamika-shastra*, selected parts of *A a-sāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* and the entire *Diamond Sutra* from the German translations by Waleser. He further translated some of the Buddha's discourses and in 1938 Alois Trčka published Drtikol's translation of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, with slight adaptations, under his name. A circle of disciples gathered around him on whom he passed complex

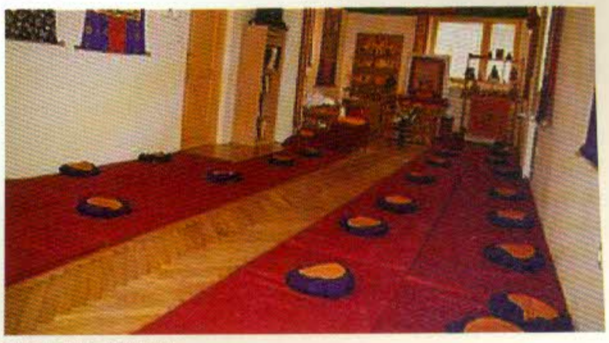
Buddhist teachings (ranging from Theravada, Mahayana and Tantrism of Vajrayana to Shankar's Advaita) whose central practice is the system of Buddhist Kundalini yoga, which he had previously practiced and taught (Lípa 2005). Another significant mystic was Květoslav Minařík (1908-1974), advocate of practical mystique, who passed on his experience gained from yogic teaching closest to Mahayana Buddhism through his work. The majority of his books were published only after 1990.

Period of decline during the communist era (1948-1989)

The period after World War Two marked by the communist coup d'etat in February 1948 and the creation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (that lasted until the Velvet Revolution of November 1989) consistently suppressed free development of any spiritual movements as potential alternatives to the ruling ideology. The year 1948 was still to see the second edition of *Buddhismus* supplemented by Mahayana and Tibetan Buddhism (Lamaism) by Lesný. In 1968, the two fundamental works of the poet and philosopher Zbyněk Fišer (1930-2007), known under the pseudonym of Egon Bondy, were published. First it was his monograph *Buddha,* representing probably the most profound philosophical portrait of this thinker in the Czech language, and the second was a samizdat-published work, *Poznámky k indické filosofii,* in which Bondy firstly succeeded in introducing the Czech readership to the essentials of philosophical teachings of the most important Buddhist philosophers and to the principal features of the basic philosophical schools. Another book was *Filosofická koncepce nejstaršího buddhismu* by Ivo Fišer (1929-2004), the disciple of Lesný, which is still one of the best academic books on Buddhism to date (Honzík 2010). Several fiction titles were published, such as *Cesta do Lhasy, kterou se svým druhem P. Josephem Gabetem v letech 1844 až 1846 vykonal a podle vzpomínek vypsal P. Evariste-Régis Huc, někdejší misionář v říši Čínské,* with the introduction by Josef Kolmaš, *Siddhartha* by Hermann Hesse, and *Seven Years in Tibet* by Heinrich Harrer. The academic research did not remain idle, either. One of the most distinguished personages in this field is the aforementioned Josef Kolmaš (*1933), the leading Czech Sinologist and Tibetologist, an expert on relations between China and Tibet whose most renowned translations were published only after 1989. In 1958, he travelled to the centres of Tibetan studies in Cheng-tu, Lan-Chou and the Derge monastery. Thanks to his inventory the collections of representative Lamaistic texts, initiations and spiritual instructions became known. He occupied himself primarily with the study of the evolution of political and legal relations between China and Tibet and established and worked as a long-term administrator of the Tibetan library at the Oriental Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. The majority of information on Tibet which is nowadays available in the Czech language derives from his work.

Tieng Viet warsaw

Outside the academic environment, the philosophic and spiritual events went largely underground. They had no common platform and isolated groups of people interested in Buddhism emerged mainly in big cities. People tried practicing individually also on the basis of the texts available to the disciples of František Drtikol and Květoslav Minařík. Among the personages influenced by Drtikol's teaching were Egon Bondy and husband and wife Eduard (1908-2002) and Míla (1920-2001) Tomášovi, whose spiritual journey drew inspiration from Eastern philosophies. They gathered a large circle of disciples. During normalization, the teaching of František Drtikol was passed on by Evžen Štekl (1921-2001), who was a sought-after Buddhist master in the 1970s and 1980s. The interest in Eastern philosophy among writers from Western Europe and the United States, such as Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, served as an inspiration. In the late 1970s, a debating club was formed around Milena Slavická in the depository of the National Gallery, whose members were conceptual artists Karel Miler, Petr Štembera and Jan Mlčoch. They came together to discuss and to translate texts especially of Zen Buddhism, such as those of Philip Kapleau (*The Three Pillars of Zen*). After they had met Vlastimil Marek and Lumír Kolíbal, who at the time were publishing Buddhist texts in a samizdat publishing house, L-books of Lumír Kolíbal, they used the contacts these two authors had by then established in Poland. In the late 1970s, they travelled to Poland and



Dharmaling-Slovenia

got together with the group of Korean Zen Buddhists in the Do Am Sah centre in Falenica near Warsaw. They went there fairly often, and it was where they started meeting their master Seung Sahn who was never granted a visa to communist Czechoslovakia. He assigned the members a Polish teacher, Andrzej Czarnecki, who started attending the group meetings after 1985. Apart from the personal transfer of the aforesaid teachings, they were probably the only practising group to achieve this during normalization. Milena Slavická became a Dharma teacher in 1989.

The publishing of the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* in 1989, translated by Oldřich Král (born 1930), a leading Czech Sinologist, was a revelation for the initiated.

Of no smaller importance in the popularization of Buddhism was yoga, since it was practiced not only by the disciples of the mystics and individuals, but also hatha yoga courses were attended by the public. For example Brno had a yoga club (Jóga klub Brno) established by Karel Werner in the 1960s.

In this period, Buddhism in Czechia and other CEE post-communist countries developed thanks to the immigration of chiefly Vietnamese Buddhists who were arriving in the socialist CEE in the 1970s and 1980s in tens of thousands. Their Buddhist activities were limited only to small groups or they frequently remained a private matter. The Buddhist activity of the Vietnamese migrants fully developed only after the collapse of the communist regimes, i.e. within the framework of Vietnamese Buddhist associations.

Period of development and heterogeneity (1990–today)

After 1989 and the collapse of communism, a wide range of opportunities for free speech opened up, which was reflected in the sphere of interest in Buddhism. Of primary importance was the effort aimed at the institutionalization of Buddhism in Czechia, which came to fruition in 1991, the year of the institution of the Buddhist Society presided by Lumír Kolíbal. Following numerous discussions, the objectives of the society settled particularly on procuring the missing Buddhist literature, connecting the Buddhists in Czechia and Slovakia, and chiefly interconnecting them with the rest of the Buddhist world in the East and West. The society succeeded in establishing numerous contacts abroad and obtained a large quantity of quality literature that forms the foundation of a future Buddhist library. Kolíbal's samizdat L-books were turned into a new publishing house, DharmaGaia, whose editorial plan mainly focuses on Buddhist literature, i.e. the series *Buddhovy rozpravy z pálijského kánonu*, Shantidevi's *Bodhicharyāvatāra* and *Jataka*, different books on the theory and practice of Theravada, Mahayana, Chan/Zen and Tibetan Buddhism and Dzogchen. Contacts were established, teachers were invited, lectures were held and people began to travel abroad to search for teachers. In 1991, the master Seung Sahn held a public discourse in Prague in which Lama Yeshe Losal also participated. In 1995, the first *phowa* took place in Pecka in the Czech Paradise, a nearly week-long ritual of a transfer of consciousness in a bardo with the participation of 600 people from Czechia and other countries under the supervision of Oleh Nydahl. Shortly after the revolution, Tibetan monks repeatedly visited Prague and created and sacrificed a sand mandala, an event that was covered by the media. A large quantity of new impulses and groups resulted in increasing fragmentation and later the demise of the Buddhist Society. Other publishers introduced Buddhist literature, first of all titles such as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead, Bardo Thodo,. The Great Liberation through Hearing in the Bardo* and *Jádro transcendentální moudrosti* translated by Josef Kolmaš and *Základy buddhismu* by Nyanasatta Thera. As for fiction, *Milarepa* of Eduard Tomáš and a book by Alexandra David-Néel should be mentioned.

In February 1990, His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited Czechoslovakia for the first time at the invitation of the then President Václav Havel who joined him for joint mediation and dialogue. It was the first of a handful of audiences of His Holiness with a head of state. His Holiness has since been coming to Czechia repeatedly, also for the occasion of Forum 2000 held in Prague annually since 1997, which serves as a meeting place for important personages of cultural and political life to discuss key issues of the globalized world.

Czechia has joined the activities of the movement for the liberation of Tibet. The association Lungta coordinates the global campaign Flag for Tibet in the Czech Republic. Between 1996 and March 10, 2010 the Tibetan flag was flown by over 360 city halls and several secondary schools. The annual manifestation in front of the building of the Chinese embassy in Prague has become a tradition.

Cinemas screened the films *Kundun* by Martin Scorsese, *Seven Years in Tibet* by Jean-Jacques Annaud, *Himalaya l'enfance d'un chef* by Eric Valli and Samsara by Pan Nalin, which notably contributed to a greater interest of the general public in the issue of Tibet and of Buddhism in a wider context.

Academic research

As far as academia is concerned, we should mention Karel Werner (born 1925), the Czech indologist, philosopher and a scholar of religion. He studied philosophy, history, Indo-European comparative philology, Sanskrit, and sinology in Czechoslovakia. After 1968, he left for Great Britain where he later worked as an Assistant Professor of Indian philosophy and religion at the School of Oriental Studies of Durham University (he acquired the professor status in 1975). He has been a Visiting Professor at the Department for the Study of Religions at Masaryk University in Brno since 1993 and an Honorary Professorial Research Associate at the Department of the Study of Religions at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of the London University. His research works deal with Vedism, Hinduism, yoga and Buddhism, often with a focus on the philosophical dimension of these traditions. Luboš Bělka (born 1958) studied philosophy and biology. Following his visit to the Republic of Buryatia in 1993, he became interested in the renewal of its religious life. He expanded this interest to Mongolia and Tibet and engaged in religious studies in London. At present he lectures on Buddhism within the framework of Religious Studies at the Department for the Study of Religions of the Faculty of Arts at Masaryk University in Brno. New religious movements and inter-religious dialogue, among other issues, are addressed by Ivan Odilo Štampach (born 1946), a Czech scholar of religion, theologian and philosopher. Since 2000, he has worked at the Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy of the University of Pardubice. Jan Honzík (born 1972) studied philosophy and has pursued the study of the Buddha's teachings and meditation since 2000. Between 2000 and 2008, he was active as a deputy chairman and later as a chairman of the International Buddhist Endowment Fund. Between 2005 and 2006 he lived as a Buddhist monk in Sri Lanka and lectures on Buddhism at the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University. He pursues the practical application of the Buddha's teachings and translated the Pali-English *Buddhist Dictionary* by Nyanatiloka. He is the editor of *Jednota v rozmanitosti. Buddhismus v České republice* ("Unity in Diversity: Buddhism in the Czech Republic") published in 2010 towards the end of a project initiated in 2008 that he authored and which should contribute to the understanding and harmony between different Buddhist schools and groups in Czechia. At the same time it represents an attempt at mapping the current Czech Buddhist scene. We used the following basic information on the activities of the individual groups and associations from this publication (Honzík 2010).

Institutionalization of Buddhism after 1990

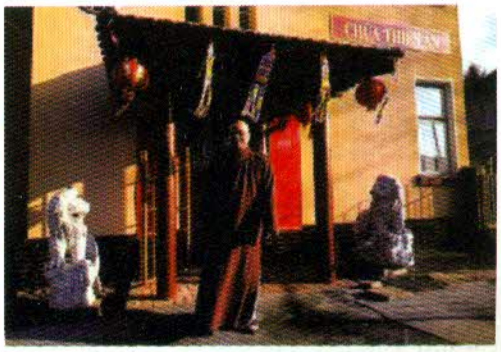
In the early 1990s, Buddhist centres, groups of diverse Buddhist schools and Buddhist charities and civic associations began cropping up. At present, their number in Czechia totals approximately fifty.

In 1998, Luboš Vojtěch and a Buddhist monk Bhante Wimala established the Lotus Prague Buddhist Centre. The centre, with its library containing over 1,000 publications, a public exhibit of the Buddha's relics and nine arahats within the framework of the annual exposition of Asian Buddhist art and celebrations of the Vesak feast, offers an opportunity for the public to learn about Buddhist teachings and their practice. Its premises are available for the meeting of people involved in the life of the Czech Buddhist community. At present, the Theravada groups of Buddha Mangala, Bodhi Prague, Friends of Dhamma and Nirodha, Zen groups of Kwan Um and Daruma and a group of Tibetan Buddhism called Karma Kagyü are active here. Yoga and Tai-Chi exercises are also held on the centre's premises. They are additionally in use by the Lungta civic association for charity activities. Distinguished teachers from Myanmar, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Malaysia have worked in the centre to spread the Theravada teachings.

Varnsdorf budd pagoda exter Czechia

HÚC MỪNG NAM MỚ
XUÂN CANH DẦN - 2010

Varnsdorf budd pagoda inter Czechia



Varnsdorf's Temple Caechia

Apart from the study of Buddhist texts, Theravada Buddhism primarily centres on mediation of mindfulness and insight (*satipattháná-vipassaná*), loving-kindness (*mettā-bhāvanā*) and on the development of ethical conduct in line with the Noble Eightfold Path with an emphasis on the actual experience of the practicing person.

The community named Přátelé Dhammy ("Friends of Dhamma") originated in 1991. The Bodhi group has been active since 1994 with close ties to Sri Lanka, which is the place of work of Bhante Pemasiri, the superior of the monastery and meditation centre Sumatuphálo Na Himi in Kanduboda and the head teacher of the group. The foundation of both these groups was due to Mirko Frýba (born 1943), a Czech Theravada monk, Bhikkhu Kusala Ánanda, who currently lives in Sri Lanka.

The Buddha Mangala group was registered in 1998. Its main teacher is Ashin Ottama, a monk of Czech origin who was ordained in Myanmar. The members practice meditation and apply the Buddha's teachings in everyday life. The group is often paid visits by teachers chiefly from Myanmar and Thailand. Members and supporters of the group often travel to the monasteries Dhammapala in Switzerland, the seat of Ashin Ottama, and to Amaravati near London. Some also visit different centres in India, The Nirodha Prague group originated in 2001 and has met regularly for meditation in the Lotus centre. Apart from its own practice, it also held weekend courses of meditation and lectures at Charles University in Prague. It collaborates with Ashtanga Vinyasa yogis to supplement their meditation practice. The group also invites monk lay teachers of the Mahasi tradition from Myanmar, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria and Czechia to the courses.

Zen Buddhism does not require that disciples know the texts or that their teaching is faithful to the tradition. The basis of the mediation practice of the Soto school is a sitting (*zazen*) or walking (*kinhin*) meditation. The Rinzai school employs the *koans*, seemingly unsolvable logical paradoxes presented to the disciples for solution while meditating. Yet the most important is the experience of enlightenment.

The Buddhist group Daruma was founded in 2008 and was later joined by the Zen monk Ejun Iechika, its current spiritual leader. The theoretical outline of the study incorporates traditional texts of the Chinese and Japanese Buddhist canon and its Indian predecessor. Some of its members sympathize with the Theravada or Tibetan traditions. Among the group's activities are calligraphy, the traditional tea ceremony, and the study of Japanese and relations between the customary martial art and Buddhist teachings.

The practice of Kodo Munseng kai, the Senshinji monastery, and the Nagomi school is grounded upon three main pillars – meditation, physical exercise and intellectual activities from which a novice can choose just one part. Kodo Mungen kai consists of loose Dojo groupings united by their common practice with the main centre located in Prague and with regular meetings with teachers from the USA, Germany, Japan, China and other countries. The Senshinji monastery was founded by the honourable Nishiyama Kosen, the abbot of the Daimanji monastery in Kyoto, in Prague in 2000. He appointed Josef Mádl (born 1960) its superior and ordained him at the same occasion (Jikan Kodo). The Nagomi school, a Zen Buddhist training monastic school established in 1987 by Josef Mádl, became transformed from the original school of martial arts of *aiki-jūjutsu* and *kenjutsu* and avows its adherence to the Soto school tradition.

The Zen school of Kwan Um derives from the Korean Buddhism of the Jogye Order. The school's founder is the Zen master Seung Sahn. He has taught in monasteries in Korea, Japan, and, since 1972, the USA. His activities served as an impulse for the creation of a series of Zen centres that in 1983 formed the international Zen school of Kwan Um. The first centre in Eastern Europe, which also hosted Czech guests interested in the study of Zen, was established in Poland in 1978. After 1989, the opportunities for the practice of Zen expanded and the members of the original group became engaged in other Buddhist schools. New groups were formed inside the Kwan Um, chiefly in Prague and Brno. They translated the speeches of Seung Sahn and other teachers, *The Compass of Zen,* and collections of *koans*. The centres now regularly host day-long sessions roughly once a month and annual five-to-six weekend-long meditation retreats supervised by a teacher. A three-month-long meditation retreat referred to as Kyol Che takes place traditionally in the Polish centre Do Am Sah in Falenica in the summer. In 2008, the winter Kyol Che was moved to the new Zen monastery, built in Korean style, of Won Kwang Sa near Esztergom in Hungary. Its construction was assisted by the Czech sangha. The essential practices in the centres of this school are *zazen*, singing of *sutras*, and the practice of the 108 bows and meditation retreats, during which conversations with a teacher are held usually in the form of *koans*. The school maintains close relations with the centres in Germany, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary. In 1992, the master Seung Sahn passed the Dharma onto the Zen mistress Soeng Hyang, the head teacher of the international school of Kwan Um, who regularly commutes to Europe and supervises meditation retreats in Czechia and Poland.

The origins of the Soto Zen of the Czech Republic school date back to the 1990s when master Kaisen's books started to be published and when his lectures and introductions to mediation reached the media. In 1993, the first Dojo was founded in Czechia. A Polish Zen monk Tomáš Dabrowski (born 1975) has been entrusted with the leadership of the Dojo in Prague and dissemination of the teaching of master Kaisen since 2004. Regular zazens, lectures and film screenings take place. The core of their practice is *zazen* and the study of classical texts, particularly sutras and the teachings of master Kaisen. *Angos* are held in the central monastery in Hoshoji in France, a venue for common practices with all Soto Zen Sanghas from Europe – France, Poland, Slovakia, the Ukraine and Russia. Soto Zen of Czechia is represented by the Sangha of Master Kaisen, who regularly visits the Zen centres in CEE countries.

Tibetan Buddhism is distinguished by four major schools – Nyingma(pa), Kagyu(pa), Sakya(pa) and Gelug(pa) – and it is based on "transmissions", i.e. handing over of the teachings from the guru to the disciple. In Czechia, the majority of groups derive from the Kagyu(pa) school that was introduced to the Western world by the Tibetan Buddhist Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. In 1967, he, together with Akong Tulku Rinpoche, founded in Scotland the first Tibetan Buddhism monastery in the West called Kagyu Samye Ling.

Bodhi Path Prague is an international non-profit organization of associated Buddhist centres under the leadership of the chief teacher, the fourteenth Shamarpa Chökyi Lodrö, one of the current holders of the Karma Kagyü lineage who assisted the establishment of the Bodhi Path centre in Prague in 2008. The starting point for the study and practice is the "Curriculum Centre Bodhi Path" compiled by Shamar Rinpoche, which deliberately overlooks the diversification of the individual schools of Tibetan Buddhism. A similar approach is emphasized also in the functioning of the individual Bodhi Path centres that host the meditation sessions, public lectures, and meditation courses.

The Diamond Way Buddhism centres (DWB) were established by a Lama of Danish origin, Ole Nydahl, all over the world. Today, there are roughly 650 of them. Lama Ole Nydahl first visited Prague in the 1980s. He gave his first public lecture in Prague in 1990. Following another lecture in 1994, the first meditation centre in Prague opened. Since then approximately fifty DWB meditation groups and centres have been established in Czechia. The original civic association Society of the Diamond Way was registered by the Czech Ministry of Culture as a religious society, Buddhism of the Diamond Way of the Karma Kagyü lineage, in 2007. The DWB centres practice lay Buddhism that is compatible with everyday life. It involves several degrees of meditation – the development of six *pāramitās* ("liberating deeds"). In 2000, the publishing house Bílý deštník ("White Umbrella") was established that issues Buddhist-oriented publications and the magazine *Buddhismus dnes* ("Buddhism Today") twice a year. International courses attended by Buddhists from around the world take place in Těnovice by Pilsen. A construction of a Czech stupa is planned there. The European Centre of DWB by Immenstadt is the European seat of the seventeenth Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje.

Drukpa Kargyud Prague, a Kagyü school, is one of the original schools of Tibetan Buddhism engaged in the practice of Vajrayana. This teaching first appeared in Czechoslovakia in the translations and practice of František Drtikol in the 1920s and 1930s. In 2003, the group's members adopted the Threefold Refuge and basic initiations in Wrocław (Poland) and form part of the Polish group Drukpa Polska – Druk Yeshe Dorje. Apart from regular meetings, the members come to visit and attend meditation retreats in Wrocław, which often host the current head of the school, His Holiness the twelfth Gyalwang Drukpa Jigme Padma Wangchen. They pursue the classical path of Tibetan Buddhism, i.e. all three vehicles of the Dharma – Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana.

The Dzogchen community centre in Prague was instituted in 1999. The international Dzogchen community was founded in Tuscany by Master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. It contains the oldest *gönpa* community and has witnessed several significant masters of the Tibetan spiritual tradition passing on their teaching, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The community pursues the study of Dzogchen teachings that refer to the primary potential of each individual, which do not belong to Buddhism nor Bön and in Tibet are considered as the core. The major practice of achieving and maintaining a state of non-dual contemplation is based on a direct transfer between teacher and his disciple and the techniques of Guru yoga and Yantra yoga. The community holds regular common exercises, weekend courses with the participation of teachers, lectures and global transmissions.

The Rabten Chödarling centre for Tibetan Buddhist studies in Liberec was set up in 2000 as a branch of the Swiss Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies Rabten Choeling, which was established by the Ven. Geshe Rabten in 1977. The most noteworthy event was the exposition of the relics of the historical Shakyamuni Buddha and the golden memorial stupa in 2004 that were later exhibited at the UN headquarters in New York.

The Rangjung Yeshe Gomde Prague is a meditation and study group that originated in 2007 thanks to the Ven. Tulku Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche who passes on the teaching of *terem* in the tradition of the Nyingma and Kagyü schools. The group is connected to the Austrian meditation centre Rangjung Yeshe Gomde, where the Western branch of the University of Buddhist Studies – Shedra – is currently taking shape under the supervision of Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche.

The Rigpa Czech Republic originated in 2006 as part of an international organization under the leadership and patronage of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the founder Sogyal Rinpoche. It is open to all schools and traditions of the Buddhist wisdom. The members of the Sangha come together to study and to organize courses for the public. The centre is connected mainly to Rigpa Germany and France. Rigpa offers a complete and gradual training in Buddhist teachings and practice and also the possibility of distance learning.

The Samten Tse Prague was founded in 1998 under the name of Karma Thegsum Chöling. In 2009, Her Eminence Jetsün Khandro Rinpoche renamed the centre to Samten Tse Prague, a step that incorporated the group in the activities of the Mindrolling International, which is led by her. It is open to all authentic teachings of the Dharma. Regarding the affiliation of the main teachers, it practices mainly according to the traditions of the Kagyü and Nyingma lineages stressing the study of texts and meditation practice. It practices rituals and an annual fasting. The members are connected to the activities of centres in Poland, Scotland, France and Germany.

The Shambala Czech Republic is a member of the international Buddhist society, Shambala International, which was instituted by the Tibetan meditation master Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche in the 1970s. In Czechia its meditation groups are located in Prague, Brno, Vyškov and Jablonec nad Nisou. They focus on the practice of systematic education in the Dharma with regular meditations, teaching of Buddhism and the Shambhala. Trungpa Rinpoche received the Shambhala teaching as a series of thought *termas* during his time spent in the USA and Canada. The students are offered monthly Sutrayana and Vajrayana seminars, mostly in the European Shambhala centre Dechen Chöling in France. The members visit centres in Poland and Germany and attend programmes held for the European community.

Buddhist organizations in Czechia

Apart from the aforesaid groups and centres practicing Buddhism, other organizations were established in the post-1989 period that engage in projects to promote Buddhist regions in Asia, particularly Tibet and the Tibetan culture.

The civic association Lungta obtains and mediates impartial information on the situation in Tibet and the Tibetan culture from the second half of the 1990s. It notifies the violation of human rights in Tibet and procures direct assistance to Tibet or northern India by public fund-raising campaigns. The association also publishes the magazine *Tibetské listy* ("Tibetan Papers") and is in charge of the campaigns *Vlajka pro Tibet v Česku* ("Flag for Tibet in Czechia") and *Veřejná sbírka Tibet* ("Public fund-raising for Tibet") the proceeds of which are channelled into the promotion of education and the education system in Tibetan communities in Tibet and abroad.

The International Buddhist Endowment Fund, established in 1993 as the International Buddhist Foundation under the patronage of the Myanmar Buddhist monk the Ven. U Rewata Dhamma, collects and provides funding for projects for the development of dhamma organized by the groups of Theravada Buddhism. One of its major aims is to create favourable conditions for the residence of Buddhist monks and nuns in Czechia characterized by a long-term effort at building a meditation centre and monastery of the Theravada tradition. Annual meditation courses, at present organized chiefly by the Bodhi Prague group, take place under its auspices. The Fund also implemented projects of financial aid for the forest monastery Salgala in Sri Lanka, the traditional abode of the Czech monks in Myanmar in 2008, and continues administering a project of assistance for poor children and orphans in Sri Lanka.

The civic association Potala was established in 2007 from the original endowment fund Potala that started functioning in 1998. It pursues the study of history, culture and way of life of the original customary societies of the Tibetan region with the aim of contributing to the preservation and conservation of the ancient cultures and human rights of their members and raising awareness of their contribution to the global cultural heritage. Within the scope of development and humanitarian aid it supports the Tibetan ethnic group in Tibet and in exile in the sphere of education, religion, ecology, self-sufficiency and placement in the labour market.

Dhammarama is a civic association that originated in 2005 with the chief objective of building a Theravada Buddhist monastery in Czechia. It is an umbrella association for the Bodhi groups that organizes sojourns of Buddhist monks who come to lecture here and it provides information on Buddhism for the public and for Czech Buddhists (Konopová 2007).

Rime web portal ensures the communication basis for the novices of Dharma and information sources for sympathizers of Buddhism outside the specific groups and schools.

The association Vietnamese Club of Sympathizers with Buddhism in the EU, with its seat in Varnsdorf, was registered in 1997. The first Buddhist temple of the monastic type with three consecrated statues of Buddha (Amitabha, Shakyamuni and Maitreia) brought from Vietnam was opened here in 2008. Its task is to pass on personal experience, raise awareness of Buddhism, stimulate the publication of books, hold lectures and develop cross-border cooperation. A Buddhist monk Thich Thanh Phuc from northern Vietnam representing the Vietnamese Buddhist Union pursues his activities here. The town of Varnsdorf commissioned a public survey to inquire about the perception of the Buddhist monastery by the local population (n=481). The majority of respondents perceive the existence of the Buddhist temple positively (40 %) or neutrally (22 %). It follows from the results of the survey that the local population has a surprisingly positive relation to religious activities of a stream of new religiosity, as is the case of Buddhism in today's Czechia.

A marked number of the aforementioned selection on Buddhist centres, groups and organizations indicates a considerable heterogeneity and plurality of Buddhist activities after 1989. In contrast to the initial stage ending in 1948, the Buddhist teaching and practice of this stage are not limited to civic-liberal circles but include larger social strata. It appears that the secularization of society in Czechia led to a marked decline in the number of believers in the traditional Christian religious societies and conversely facilitated the development of an appreciable growth of non-Christian religious movements, including Buddhism. Already during the Population and Housing Census of 2001, almost 7,000 people claimed their affiliation with Buddhism and the number keeps growing. According to current estimates the number is around 10,000 inhabitants (Table 1), while in 1993, at the time of the demise of the Buddhist Society, the number of adherents was assessed to be roughly 1,000.

Czechia is among the states with the highest share of atheists in Europe and worldwide. The proportion of residents without any religious faith as of 2001 totalled 58.2 % as opposed to 7.2 % identified by the 1921 Census (Havlíček 2005). Toward the end of 2010, Buddhism of the Diamond Way of the Karma Kagyü lineage was the only officially registered institution in the index of churches and religious societies administered by the Ministry of Culture of the CR (the registration requires a minimum number of 300 members). It is however apparent from the synopsis of the individual groups of practising people that the membership base keeps growing. Judging by the choice on Buddhist publications and their print runs, the Buddhist grassroots is fairly numerous. A sound assessment of the development trend of Buddhism in Czechia nonetheless is however currently not possible because of a lack of data. The available data derive from the 2001 Census and the results of this year's Census will be published only in 2012. In 2001, 6,817 persons claimed their affiliation with Buddhism in Czechia. The most distinctly represented age categories were 20-29 and 40-49 years of age. The share of men (63.8 %) exceeds that of women which amounts to 36.2 % (Konopová 2007). It can nevertheless be stated that Buddhism, like other religions, exhibits a strong trend toward individualism. The majority of Buddhist-minded inhabitants are therefore not members of a religious institution and their creed is of a private nature. This privatization of religion has not merely impacted merely on Buddhism but the entire religious scene in Czechia.

Conclusion

Buddhism in the Central and Eastern post-communist European countries shows several specific features. It appears that secularization of society in Europe and Czechia has led to a marked slump in the number of believers of the traditional Christian societies and conversely enabled a bigger development of non-Christian religious movements, including Buddhism.

Buddhism, like other religions, is marked by a distinct trend toward individualism, which is attested to by the "open" activities of the centres, especially meditation courses and lectures attended mostly by sympathizers. The majority of the Buddhist-minded population is thus not affiliated with any religious institution and the creed of this group of inhabitants is of a private nature. This privatization of religion has impacted not only on Buddhism but generally the entire religious scene in Europe.

A significant number of the aforesaid Buddhist centres, groups and organizations indicate a high heterogeneity and plurality of Buddhist activities after 1989. In Czechia, for example, slightly more than half of the Buddhist centres are connected to international movements (Cirklová 2010) which points to a high degree of networking of the Buddhist activities in CEE countries. In Theravada Buddhism groups a preferred collaboration directly with the gurus and organizations from Asia rather than with the European centres is apparent (Cirklová 2010). The majority of Buddhist activities are focused in larger cities and primarily in the metropolises of the individual countries.

The development of Buddhism in CEE is conditioned also by the growing immigration of Asians, mainly from China and Vietnam. This can be documented for example by the consecration of the first Vietnamese Buddhist temple in Czechia in 2008.

Generally, Buddhism in the post-communist region of CEE is accepted and the major Buddhist schools of thought form part of the inter-religious dialogue. European Buddhism ceases to be a gradually imported foreign phenomenon and it is perceived more as part of the European culture (Cirklová 2010). It is however true that in Eastern Europe the degree of popularity is still smaller than in Western Europe. Buddhism in Europe is still perceived not as religion but rather as a lifestyle and a philosophy of a spiritual practice applied in everyday life, undoubtedly also as a result of the consumer orientation of the society in CEE.

The previous works of research (i.e. Rotbacher 2008) verified a fairly high conformity between the normative principles of Christianity and Buddhism. A great number of common values shared by both Christianity and Buddhism leaves space for a creative dialogue between Christian Europe and Buddhist Asia.

Acknowledgements

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UK and EUROPE

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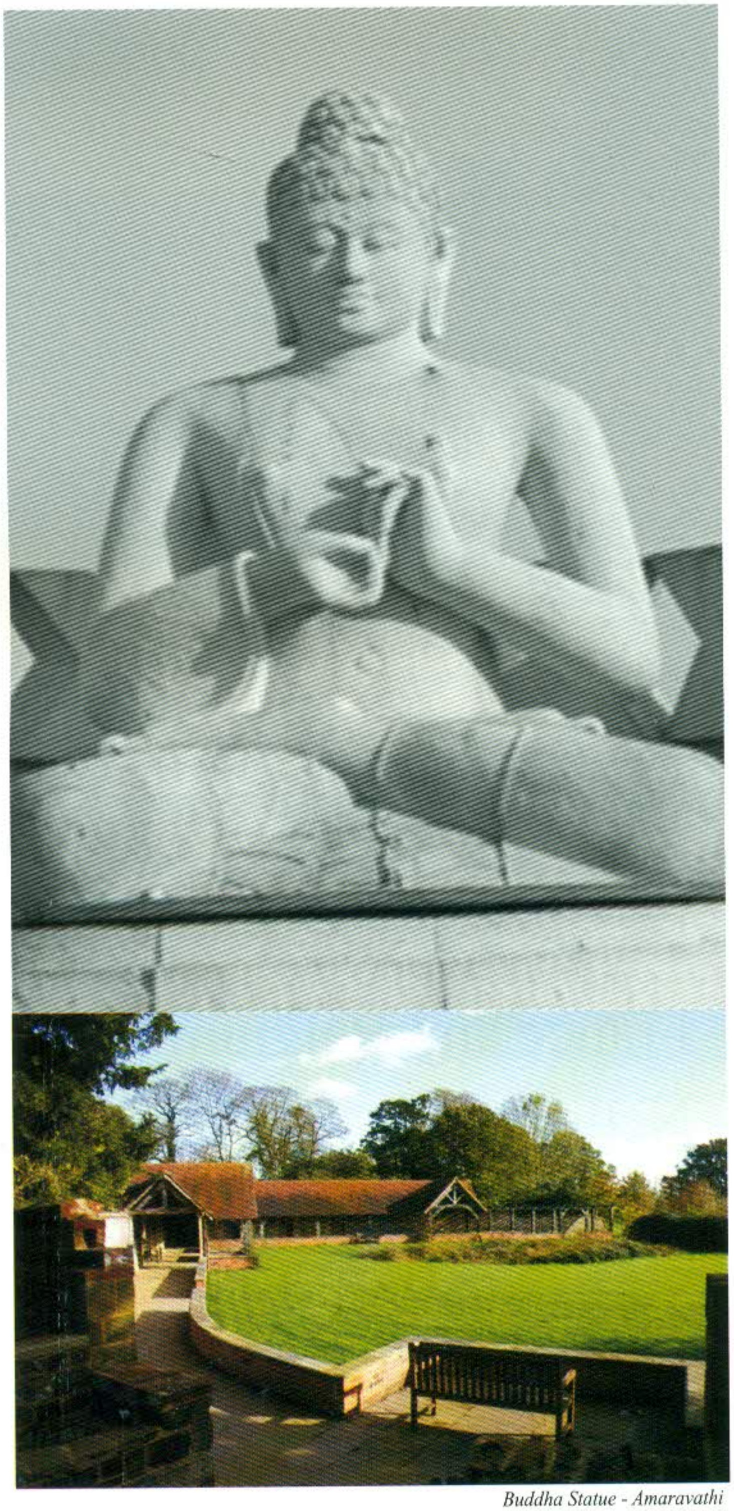
ITALY
SPAIN

United Kingdom
France and Belgium
Netherland
Germany, Austria and Switzerland
Scandinavia
Italy
Spain



Buddha Statue - Amaravathi

ESSAY 26

Buddhism in the United Kingdom

Robert Bluck

Introduction

Compared with centuries of expansion and development in Asia, the history of Buddhism in Britain appears at first to be only a recent footnote. A hundred years ago there was a single group of convert Buddhists in London; and very few Asian Buddhists migrated to the UK before the 1960s. Yet it was often British scholars from the nineteenth century whose writings first informed other Western countries about the Buddha and his teachings. British writers have often helped Buddhist ideas to permeate much of Western society, and contemporary Britain provides an unusual example of many different forms of Buddhism in close proximity. So there is a significant narrative here whose influence reaches beyond the Buddhist community and beyond the British Isles.

The first part of this essay will trace how Buddhism first came to Britain and how various traditions developed in the country, including Asian and convert Buddhist communities, the current range of Buddhist organizations, and recent statistical information on ethnicity. The second part will focus on contemporary Britain, considering Buddhism's role in British society, the process of adaptation, differences between Asian and convert forms, and Buddhism's cultural and educational contribution. Finally there will be a glimpse at the challenges currently being faced and the possible future of Buddhism in Britain.

Buddhism and Victorian Britain

Before the emergence of eighteenth-century rationalism, religions other than Christianity were usually either condemned or ignored in Europe. During the nineteenth century Buddhism was often viewed as "a field of rational scientific knowledge" or even "an object of romantic fantasy" (Batchelor, 1994: xii), rather than a religion to be practised. In Victorian Britain the Christian churches were beginning to lose their authority, partly as a result of splits between denominations, but also because religion was increasingly viewed as private belief rather than public worship. It may well have been this "diversity and privatisation of religion, rather than unbelief" (Harris, 1994: 179) which gradually led towards a secularised society more receptive to Buddhist ideas.

An intellectual interest in both Hinduism and Buddhism began early in the nineteenth century, though churchmen regularly condemned them as idol-worship. Buddhism attracted particular attention, and by the 1830s was seen by some in Britain as "the religious beliefs and practices of most of Asia" (Almond, 1988: 11). Christian missionaries often gave a confused picture of Buddhism in their evangelical writings; though books such as R. Spence Hardy's *Manual of Budhism* [sic] (1853) were rather more scholarly and "ironically helped to popularise in England the religion which their authors were working to supplant in the East" (Clausen, 1975: 2).

Liberal British theologians such as F.D. Maurice looked for good in "other religions" and saw in Buddhism "a profound feeling of reverence for the human spirit" (quoted in Thomas, 1988: 81). Others were attracted by Buddhist texts which showed an ancient tradition, a search for intellectual freedom, or parallels with Christian teachings; though there was little contact with Asian Buddhists.

Buddhism was praised for the charity and humility which underlay its moral precepts, but criticized for lacking "any sense of sin", and (worse still) "any sense of duty" (Brear, 1975: 150-1). Almond (1988: 12, 40) has neatly called this "the *creation* of Buddhism" by the Victorians, who saw contemporary Asian Buddhism as inferior to the "ideal textual Buddhism of the past", which had become part of British scholarly culture. The Buddha himself was only recognized as an historical (rather than mythological) figure in the 1850s, but was then widely praised for his "superior mental endowments . . . sanctity of character . . . serene gentleness . . . wisdom and eloquence . . . [and] compassion and sympathy": in effect he came to be seen as "an ideal Victorian gentleman" (Almond, 1988: 77-9).

Although there was admiration for Buddhism's ethical values, tolerance and peacefulness, the Victorians were often confused by teachings such as *anatta* (no-soul, not-self), which they saw as personal annihilation, and *dukkha* (suffering, unsatisfactoriness), which they equated with universal pessimism. Two scholars helped to clarify the British understanding of Buddhism, while at the same time advancing the new discipline of "comparative religion". The linguist Max Müller (1823-1900) worked in Oxford for many years translating both

Hindu and Buddhist scriptures, which he felt represented the essence of these religious traditions. By contrast T.W. Rhys Davids (1843-1922) saw Buddhism as a living religion while working in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). He founded the Pali Text Society in 1881 and is mostly remembered now for his pioneering translations of the Buddha's discourses; but his immediate influence was due to his popular *Buddhism*, first published in 1877, which brought the subject to a much wider audience. He also clarified the concept of Nirvana, previously seen as nihilistic, by insisting that it is not the extinction of the soul, but rather "the extinction of that grasping condition of mind and heart . . . perfect peace, goodness, and wisdom" (Rhys Davids, 1882: 111-12).

The concentration on Pali texts led translators to see Theravada Buddhism as the earliest and most authentic form, with Mahayana traditions often dismissed as superstitious corruptions rather than legitimate developments. Even Rhys Davids was openly hostile to Tibetan Buddhism, whose priestly hierarchy, worship of 'saints' and elaborate rituals he condemned as reminiscent of Roman Catholicism.

As well as scholarly translations, essays on Buddhism appeared in popular journals, as the influence of the Christian churches continued to decline. In 1879, Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia* was published, a long poem on the Buddha's life whose great success both demonstrated and fuelled the Victorian fascination with Buddhism's founder. Buddhism's perceived agnosticism, its lack of supernatural dogma and its emphasis on self-help, together with the heroic story of the Buddha himself, might well have appealed to disaffected Christians. However, there were hardly any converts before 1900, as the reticent Victorians felt "an overt commitment was socially difficult" (Almond, 1988: 36). With no Buddhist organizations in London, the few potential converts were drawn to Madame Blavatsky and the Theosophists rather than to mainstream Buddhism. Although Theosophy was very different from Buddhist teaching and practice, it acted in some ways as "a romantic foil to the rationalism of the scholars" (Batchelor, 1994: 270), prefiguring the tension between academics and practitioners in early Buddhist societies.

The Beginnings of Practice

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed a gradual transition from academic interest to personal involvement, though still on a small scale. In 1907, the Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland was formed in London with Rhys Davids as its president. Weekly public meetings were held for lectures, discussion and scripture readings; but there was no mention of meditation. Soon there were 150 members, though some saw Buddhism as an intriguing hobby rather than a life-changing spiritual practice: the scholars and students had a rather different approach from an inner group who met privately "to further the teachings, and imitate the life of the Buddha" (Humphreys, 1968: 8). In 1908, the Society welcomed Ananda Metteyya (Allan Bennett) (1872-1923), one of the first Englishmen to ordain as a Theravada monk, on his mission to London. However, he was not a good speaker and, hampered by *Vinaya* restrictions on eating, sleeping and handling money, he returned disappointed to Burma after five months. Interest was still almost exclusively in Theravada Buddhism, and was mainly 'ethical and intellectual', emphasizing knowledge and personal morality as against "Christian faith and dogma" (Baumann, 1995: 57).

In 1924 a new Buddhist Lodge of the Theosophical Society was formed (replacing the ailing Buddhist Society), with a young Christmas Humphreys as its president. The Lodge was firmly based on practice rather than scholarship and had a shrine room for meditation. Members took the Five Precepts in Pali at meetings, but also produced rites of passage in English, including a funeral service with Buddhist scriptures, which still sounded rather like the Victorians at prayer: "Wherefore hearken now, and in the turmoil of the day and in the silence of the night, remember the message of the All-Compassionate One" (Humphreys, 1934: 21).

London_Buddhist_Vihara_UK

The Sinhalese Buddhist revivalist Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933), founder of the Maha Bodhi Society, visited England in 1925 and helped found the London Buddhist Vihara, which opened in 1926 as the first Buddhist temple in Britain. British readers were also introduced to new Mahayana ideas in the seminal *Essays* *in Zen Buddhism* (1927) by D.T. Suzuki (1870-1966). Suzuki visited the Lodge in 1936, and those who met him found that "an hour with a Zen master was worth weeks of literary study" (Humphreys, 1968: 41).

In 1935, Humphreys claimed there were thousands leading their lives on Buddhist principles, and a 1937 editorial in the Lodge's journal *Buddhism in England* claimed that Buddhism was "spreading rapidly", with many students outside Buddhist societies ("Buddhism in the West", 1937: 33). It is hard to tell if such assertions are accurate: a war-time editorial described the public perception of a Buddhist as an idol-worshipper, "an atheist or crank . . . a student of comparative religion or a poseur" ("The False and the True", 1940: 149). In 1943, the journal was renamed *The Middle Way*, and the Buddhist Lodge became the Buddhist Society, with new premises, an improved library, and more frequent meetings, though activities were severely limited during the Second World War.

In 1945, the Buddhist Society published its "Twelve Principles of Buddhism", which Humphreys commended to the Second World Buddhist Conference in Tokyo in 1952 as "a simple creed or set of principles on which the Buddhist world may be united" (Humphreys, 1953: 116). By 1955 he hoped that they might be "adopted as the basis of World Buddhism", though each tradition would remain "free to develop in its own particular way" (Humphreys, 1968: 53). He saw neither irony nor cultural imperialism in a Western lawyer advising Asians how to redefine their own Buddhism. The Society celebrated its twenty-fifth year in 1949 with an exhibition of Tibetan art, a reception at India House, a new shrine given by the Thai ambassador, and the publication of Humphreys' *Zen Buddhism*: he wrote with satisfaction that so many people noticed "that Buddhism in England was *an established and growing institution*" (Humphreys, 1968: 52). Like the Victorians, the Buddhist Society may have created the ideal Buddhism they recognised.

During the 1950s the *Middle Way* began to mention specific traditions, with references to Theravada monks, articles on Zen, and suggestions about the future form of Western Buddhism. The Society's first Summer School was held in 1952 and the following year speakers included D.T. Suzuki and the scholars and translators Edward Conze (1904-79), I.B. Horner (1896-1981) and Maurice Walshe (1911-98). Celebrations in 1954 marked thirty years of the Society, which Humphreys described as "the oldest, largest and most influential Buddhist organization in the West", neither proselytising nor promoting any particular school, but acting as "a collective voice for the growing body of British Buddhism" (Humphreys, 1955: 171, 174).

Two books published in 1951 helped to spread the growing interest in Buddhism. Humphreys' popular Penguin volume *Buddhism* sold 110,000 copies in four years (and 300,000 by 1967), while Conze's *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* was more scholarly but perhaps equally influential. New Buddhist societies also began to form outside London in several towns and cities.

The longstanding wish for an ordained Western sangha appeared to be fulfilled in 1955 when William Purfurst (1906-71) returned to England after being ordained in Thailand as Ven. Kapilavaddho. Humphreys (1955: 174-5) hailed the arrival of "our own bhikkhus" as "a new chapter in the history of Buddhism in England", but his hopes were premature. Kapilavaddho disrobed due to ill health in 1957, though he helped to found the English Sangha Trust in 1956, whose efforts finally established a Theravada *sangha* in Britain twenty years later.

The London Buddhist Vihara, closed by the war, re-opened in 1954 with several Sinhalese monks, after discussions supported by the Buddhist Society; and Conze's *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages* was published. The Society's membership was growing, and there were more frequent meetings, reviews and articles on Buddhism, and broadcast talks. Humphreys (1968: 58) even hoped that one of the visiting Japanese *roshis* who were "so impressed with the quality and range of the study of Zen Buddhism which they find in the Society" might soon move to London. The Society saw itself at the centre of this activity, and in 1955 Humphreys claimed that their premises were "recognized as the headquarters of Buddhism in Europe" (Humphreys, 1968: 56).

By 1958, Humphreys was confident that with Theravada practitioners and Tibetan ritual in several European countries, and Zen becoming "so popular that it is in danger of becoming a cult", Buddhism was no longer an unusual minority belief, but had become "an integral part of Western thought" (Humphreys, 1958: 126). With only a dozen Buddhist groups in Britain, this seems exaggerated, but it highlights the new emphasis on different schools which was beginning to develop.

New Traditions and New Growth

During the 1960s, Buddhism began to grow more rapidly as part of Britain's increasing religious pluralism, influenced by both Asian immigration and New Age ideas – one supporting traditional values and the other promoting innovation. In the Theravada tradition developments began to reflect the needs of Asian communities as well as convert Buddhists. The London Buddhist Vihara moved to Chiswick in 1964, and the King and Queen of

Thailand opened the Buddhapadipa Vihara in London in 1966. These sanghas were supported largely by the Sri Lankan and Thai communities. The Hampstead Buddhist Vihara opened in 1962 as "the first intended for Western-born monks" (Walshe, 1963: 172), and two years later the English Theravada monk Sangharakshita returned from India as the senior monk.

Buddhapadipa Vihara

Sangharakshita soon polarized traditional Theravada supporters and those looking for new forms of Buddhism: the trustees became alarmed by his unconventional approach and behaviour, and in 1966 he was dismissed. Sangharakshita's response in 1967 was to start his own movement, the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO), a conscious attempt to promote teachings and practices appropriate for modern Britain. Sangharakshita selected elements from Theravada and Tibetan traditions and presented them as an essential Western Buddhism shorn of Asian cultural accretions. He ordained core members into a new Order which was seen as neither monastic nor lay, emphasizing personal commitment rather than a celibate lifestyle.

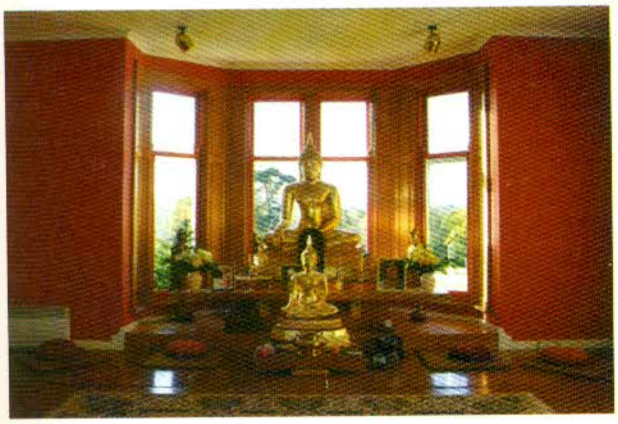
Following the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959, many Tibetans fled across the Himalaya to India and beyond. Monks and teachers soon began to arrive in Britain; and in 1961 the Dalai Lama agreed to become the Patron of the Buddhist Society. The first Tibetan Buddhist centre in Europe was established at Samye Ling in Dumfriesshire in 1967 by two young Tibetan Buddhist teachers, Akong Rinpoche and the controversial Chogyam Trungpa. Their Karma Kagyu school has sought to preserve traditional Tibetan teaching, practice and culture, passing on meditation and devotional practices in a monastic context with ethnic Tibetan teachers.

By 1966 there were at least twenty-two lay Buddhist groups, including four in London, though the Buddhist Society ominously excluded others "no longer worthy of the name" from the *Middle Way* (Humphreys, 1966: 84). The Society began to appear increasingly conservative. In 1967, with anti-war protests sweeping across America and Europe, Humphreys (1968: 82) proclaimed that Buddhist organizations should ignore the fighting, the arguments and 'politics of any kind'. He still saw the Society – with its fine London premises, large library, lectures and classes – as central to (or even synonymous with) with Buddhism in England. Meanwhile, young Britons were often encountering Buddhism on the hippy trail to Asia, or at new monastic centres in Britain, rather than visiting the Society's headquarters in Eccleston Square.

Throssel Hole Monastery

During the 1970s the number of lay groups doubled to over 100 and four significant new traditions emerged. In 1972, Throssel Hole monastery in Northumberland was founded by Roshi Kennett, an Englishwoman who trained in Japan. This tradition is firmly rooted in Japanese Soto Zen monasticism and emphasises *zazen* meditation, moral and compassionate behaviour and the Buddha nature of all beings. In 1973 the Samatha Trust was formed, following retreats led by a Thai meditation teacher. A lay Theravada organization, its local groups practise structured *samatha* (calmness) meditation with individual guidance from teachers, as well as Pali chanting, textual study and discussion. In 1975, Richard Causton became leader of Soka Gakkai International UK, and a movement with only 200 members started to grow rapidly as a lay branch of Japanese Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, partly through enthusiastic proselytizing. Their central practice is the repeated chanting of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, honouring the name of the Lotus Sutra, rather than silent meditation. In 1978, after several attempts, a Western Theravada sangha was finally established at the Hampstead Vihara with the arrival from Thailand of American-born Ajahn Sumedho and three other Western monks. Soon the trustees were able to purchase Chithurst House in Sussex to develop a larger monastery. This

Forest Sangha tradition first appeared as a conservative Theravada monasticism, emphasising both *samatha* and *vipassana* (insight) meditation, as well as mindfulness and devotional practice, within a social structure little adapted to modern urban Britain.



Chithurst Monastery

There were further developments in the Tibetan tradition. Two more Kagyu centres opened, firstly in 1973 Kham Tibetan House in Saffron Waldon, led by Lama Chime Rinpoche, and then in 1975 Kagyu Ling in Manchester, led by Lama Jampa Thaye (David Stott), one of the very few Westerners authorized to teach Tibetan Buddhism. In the Gelug tradition, the Manjushri Institute opened in Cumbria in 1976 as part of the international Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, newly set up by Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Zopa after a visit to Europe from Nepal. In 1977, Geshe Kelsang Gyatso arrived as senior monk and began to operate increasingly independently, resulting in conflict with the Foundation.

Meanwhile the FWBO opened the London Buddhist Centre in Bethnal Green, and began to establish a distinctive pattern of urban centres, right livelihood businesses and single-sex communities.

The 1980s witnessed considerable expansion. The number of Buddhist groups grew to around 300, partly due to the growth of Soka Gakkai, which established an impressive national headquarters at Taplow Court in Berkshire. New Theravada temples were opened by Thai and Sri Lankan communities in London with their own Asian monks; and in 1984 the Forest Sangha established a large monastery at Amaravati in Hertfordshire for Western monks and nuns, with an adjoining lay retreat centre. In Wiltshire, the House of Inner Tranquillity opened in 1980 as a lay vipassana centre, but developed into an unusual sub-tradition where the founder, Alan James, who had been a Theravadin monk for three years, began to ordain monks and nuns into a new order of his own.

The Kagyu and Gelug schools continued to be prominent in Tibetan Buddhism, with a growing community of monastics and lay members at Kagyu Samye Ling (where a magnificent Tibetan temple was inaugurated in 1988), and a similar expansion at Geshe Kelsang's Gelug community at Manjushri.

The most prominent Western figure in Rinzai Zen in Britain has been Dr Irmgard Schloegl (1921-2007), who trained in Japan for ten years, returned to teach at the Buddhist Society and started the London Zen Centre, which became the Shobo-an Temple in 1984. She was ordained as Myokyo-ni in 1984 by Roshi Soko Morinaga (one of seven monks flown from Japan for the purpose) at Chithurst Monastery, with Forest Sangha monks as witnesses. The Fairlight Zen Temple, a branch of Shobo-an, was opened near Luton in 1996, and Myokyo-ni has ordained monks there; but it is Soto rather than Rinzai which has become the predominant Zen tradition in Britain.

The FWBO opened further centres and there were 300 Order members by 1986. The Buddhist Society, by contrast, grew much more slowly, from 1,000 members in 1964, when there were fewer than twenty Buddhist groups, to about 1,600 in 1983, when there were well over 100 groups.

The fastest growth yet was seen in the 1990s, when groups more than trebled, again linked to continued development within Soka Gakkai. In 1991, the Japanese Nichiren Shoshu priesthood expelled the world-wide lay membership after a dispute, but even this disruption did not slow expansion down, and UK membership grew to 6,000.

In 1990, Geshe Kelsang returned to Manjushri after a three-year retreat and introduced a more structured teaching regime. In 1991 he founded the New Kadampa Tradition, independent of the Gelug school, and the new movement spread rapidly from the Manjushri centre, establishing almost 200 groups in ten years. The New Kadampa emphasizes an unbroken Gelug lineage, yet has no Tibetan followers and sees itself as outside Tibetan Buddhism. It emphasizes the importance of Geshe Kelsang as a spiritual guide, and the development of strong faith, inner peace and compassion through detailed study programmes based on his books.

Elsewhere in Tibetan Buddhism, the Manjushri London Centre changed its name to the Jamyang Meditation Centre to emphasize its separateness from the Manjushri Institute. Geshe Tashi arrived at Jamyang in 1994 and it has become the focus for traditional Gelug teaching, hosting visits by the Dalai Lama and other teachers and developing courses on Tibetan Buddhism and culture. Kagyu Samye Ling had some 30,000 visitors a year, and purchased Holy Island off Arran to develop as an international retreat centre. With Nyingma and Sakya groups also established, all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism were now represented in Britain, with Western teachers such as Lama Jampa Thaye and Rigdzin Shikpo (Michael Hookham) drawing on more than one school to present Tibetan teachings in a way suited to Western students. As well as specific schools and teachers, there are organizations such as the Tibet Society and the Tibet Foundation which support Tibetan exiles, promote Tibetan Buddhism and culture, and publicise the Dalai Lama's peace message.

Other traditions also continued to grow. There was controversy in 1998 with anonymous online allegations of abuse within the FWBO; but the number of Order members rose to 500. The Samatha Trust opened a new national meditation centre at Greenestreete in Powys. There were thirty Soto Zen monks and nuns at Throssel Hole and 30 local groups. By 2000 there were sixteen Theravada viharas in London, Birmingham and other cities, with Asian communities supporting Thai, Sri Lankan or Burmese monks, as well as European monks and nuns at four rural Forest Sangha monasteries.

The Current Pattern of Buddhism in Britain

A detailed analysis of groups, centres and organizations listed in *The Buddhist Directory* (1997, 2000) and/or *Religions in the UK* (1997, 2001) shows that by the end of the twentieth century there were over thirty different traditions or sub-traditions of Buddhism in Britain, with almost 1,000 Buddhist groups and centres in all. These were made up of 454 East Asian (a convenient term for traditions originating in China or Japan, including 300 Soka Gakkai and 111 Zen groups), 284 Tibetan (including 183 New Kadampa groups), 124 Theravada and fifty-eight unaffiliated groups (see Bluck, 2008: 13-14).

The number of groups in each tradition does not help to answer the obvious question: how many Buddhists are there in Britain? Estimates have varied widely and often assume that the majority are white converts rather than Asian immigrants.

The UK 2001 Census gave the first definitive answer here by enabling information on religion and ethnicity to be cross-referenced. Even so, the figures given in Table 1 may obscure part of the picture. Of the 152,000 people who identified themselves as Buddhists, only 14,600 described themselves as "Asian or Asian British", and many Thai, Sri Lankan and Burmese (and some Koreans, Vietnamese and Tibetans) described themselves as "Other Ethnic Groups"). So there appear to have been about 60,000 white convert Buddhists and over 85,000 with a mainly Asian background (see Bluck, 2008: 15-16).

Table 1 Ethnicity of Buddhists in the UK

Ethnicity	Percentage	Numbers
White	38.79	59,000
Mixed	3.22	4,900
Asian or Asian British	9.64	14,600
Black or Black British	1.04	1,600
Chinese	23.75	36,100
Other Ethnic Group	23.56	35,800
All Buddhists	100.0	152,000

(Source: www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001: figures rounded to nearest hundred)

Many groups and centres will have core members, regular attendees and occasional visitors, and some local groups have only a handful of members. Relatively few groups have large numbers of supporters, which strongly suggests that many British Buddhists have little or no formal contact with groups or centres, practising instead on their own, and perhaps visiting Buddhist centres occasionally for festivals or retreats. There are unknown numbers of these independent or 'lone Buddhists', who may practise in ways which combine elements from different traditions.

The complex pattern of traditions and sub-traditions catering for converts and/or Asian Buddhists in Britain has continued to develop in the decade since 2000, with Theravada, Tibetan, Zen and FWBO groups in most cities and large towns. All four traditions are present from Cornwall to Northumberland, from Edinburgh to the Highlands, and in various parts of Wales and Ireland. Although reliable statistics are often unavailable, it is clear that Soka Gakkai, the New Kadampa and the FWBO are the three largest organizations, while the Forest Sangha, Samatha Trust, Karma Kagyu, Gelug, Soto Zen and the newly-arrived Community of Interbeing (see below) all have substantial support. Though other organizations are smaller, they include temples and other groups which between them may represent the majority of Asian Buddhists in Britain.

In the Theravada tradition, the monastic Forest Sangha led by Ajahn Sumedho (www.forestsangha.org.uk) is supported by lay residents and forty local groups, and remains part of the Thai Theravada tradition. Senior monks and nuns lead week-long retreats at Amaravati, though lay people lead their own weekend events. Smaller monastic centres mainly in London and the

Midlands are supported by the local Sri Lankan, Thai and Burmese communities. The Samatha Trust offers meditation courses at Greenestreete and twenty-eight local groups, describing *samatha* meditation as 'an effective but gentle way of training the mind to develop inner strength and freedom from turmoil, leading on to clarity and understanding' (www.samatha.org); and there are several lay centres teaching *vipassana* meditation.

In Tibetan Buddhism, practitioners are predominantly converts rather than ethnic Tibetans. Samye Ling (www.samyeling.org), led by Akong Rinpoche and his brother Lama Yeshe Losal, encourages 'people of all faiths or none' for day visits and weekend courses which include meditation, mindfulness and yoga; while retreats range from a week to a full year, with a four-year retreat for experienced practitioners. The New Kadampa (www.kadampa.org) is now an international organization with 1,100 centres and branches, 300 of them in Britain, often with a resident monk or nun The Manjushri Centre offers a programme of meditation classes, courses and retreats aimed at applying Buddhist teachings to daily life. There are also smaller groups following each of the four traditional Tibetan schools or combining elements from them.

In East Asian Buddhism, Soka Gakkai (www.sgi-uk.org) now has 450 local groups and remains part of the Japanese-based international humanistic movement, though individual members may focus more directly on changing their own lives through chanting. Throssel Hole (www.throssel.org.uk) remains a substantial Soto Zen monastic community, led since 1982 by Reverend Master Daishin Morgan, supported by lay groups and offering a programme of retreats and other events. The Community of Interbeing (www.interbeing.org.uk) is an international movement led by the Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh, which only came to Britain in 1996 but already has fifty local groups, forty ordained members, several UK teachers, a programme of retreats and training and plans for a national centre in Dorset. Smaller Zen and Chan groups cater mainly for converts, while there are Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean temples in London for their respective ethnic communities.

Turning to what might loosely be described as Western Buddhism, the FWBO (www.fwbo.org) remains very much the largest organisation, with over 600 Order members in Britain and ninety groups, centres and businesses whose activities include meditation, yoga, arts and health centres, wholefood cafés and Buddhist publications and films. Sangharakshita stood down as head of the Order in 2000 and became a less dominant figure. There are also many other Western organizations, from the Buddhist Society to Buddhist charities, some of which will be mentioned later; and many individuals have developed their own personal forms of Western Buddhism practice.

It should be clear by now that there is no 'typical British Buddhist' whose experience may be conveniently described. With almost all Buddhist traditions now present here, there is a bewildering array of Theravada, Tibetan, Zen and other forms on offer to potential converts, each of them focusing in their own way on the practice of morality, meditation and devotion. As with other countries there is a wide range of commitment, from nominal Buddhists to ordained monks and nuns. Converts often begin by reading about Buddhism and then visiting a group or centre to receive meditation instruction. Most remain as regular meditators and group members, though a few eventually become leaders or even lay teachers. Less than one per cent will make the full-time commitment of ordination, about half of them as Theravada, Tibetan or Zen monks and nuns (with New Kadampa as the largest group) and half as Western Buddhist Order members.

There are various reasons why people in Britain convert to Buddhism, often as a reaction to the Christian churches' (real or perceived) emphasis on correct belief reinforced by hierarchical structures. Some are attracted by a spiritual path of morality and meditation which encourages self-reliance and offers an end to human suffering without the need for divine intervention. Others may seek a new sense of spiritual community and mutual support. Some are drawn to Buddhist organizations which can explain methods of practice and offer "personal spiritual guidance from experienced practitioners, in a context where neither theistic belief nor creedal assent are expected" (Bluck, 2008: 190). There is even an attraction to the 'differentness' of Buddhism as an oriental mysticism, a colourful Tibetan spiritual iconography, or a philosophical system which both eludes Western categories and challenges Western values.

Buddhism and British Society

The popular appeal of books by the Dalai Lama and other Buddhist authors, encouraging the development of compassionate attitudes and behaviour, is one of several examples of Buddhism's wider influence in Britain. Whether they follow a spiritual path or not, many people have experienced the therapeutic value of Buddhist-style meditation in reducing stress or coping with personal problems. Buddhism's First Precept (to avoid harming living beings) may strike a chord with non-Buddhists inclined to vegetarianism or pacifism, which feature little in the Christian tradition. This Buddhist concept of the preciousness of human life has also been cited in wider debates on abortion, suicide and euthanasia, as well as armed conflict and terrorism. However, it is not always clear whether Buddhist teaching and practice are actually influencing British social attitudes and behaviour or merely reflecting them.

Buddhism is usually seen as a peaceable and tolerant religion. Compared with other minority religious voices in Britain, Buddhists have appeared remarkably quiet, rarely seeking public recognition or campaigning for state-funded schools. This is partly due to their smaller numbers, but also because the community is divided first into Asians and convert Buddhists, and then into ethnic groups and different traditions. The largest single group (Soka Gakkai) represents only five percent of British Buddhists; and convert Buddhists may well see their identity as already established within mainstream British society.

However, some organizations have consciously sought publicity, notably the FWBO, which has sometimes portrayed itself as the new British Buddhism. An earlier emphasis on creating an ideal Buddhist society which could influence and change Britain has faded into a more accommodating approach, but the movement maintains a high public profile. Other organizations tend to focus on private practice rather than public image, though the media may view this in different ways. The Forest Sangha has been regarded as the quiet face of traditional Buddhism, or the monastic centre of official Buddhism in Britain. The New Kadampa by contrast has been described as inward-looking and secretive, and negative early press coverage of Soka Gakkai saw it as a cult rather than a legitimate Buddhist tradition. Both organizations have been wary of media contacts, and their public relations remain somewhat strained.

The Buddhist Society still sometimes sees itself as the official voice of Buddhism in meetings with government departments and religious leaders, though very few British Buddhists are members. Since its formation in 1994 the Network of Buddhist Organizations has supported dialogue between the various traditions in Britain, and has become "the primary inter-Buddhist organization in the UK" (Waterhouse, 2001: 154). However, neither organization can provide the single authoritative voice on current issues which public bodies may wish for: the question of who speaks for British Buddhists remains unresolved.

There is considerable variety in both internal relationships between Buddhist traditions and their attitudes to society as a whole. The Forest Sangha, for example, has established links with other Buddhist traditions and some Christian groups, attended interfaith conferences and peace vigils, and held an open day for local people to see the new Amaravati temple. Samye Ling and Throssel Hole have also engaged with other religious traditions within and beyond Buddhism, and overcome the initial wariness of their local communities. However, the FWBO has sometimes had difficult relationships with other Buddhist groups and has shown open hostility towards Christianity, though these attitudes have softened in recent years. New Kadampa followers are not always convinced of the benefits of contact with other Buddhists. They and Soka Gakkai members may still see their own movement as the true Buddhism, prompting a rather more exclusive approach.

Despite internal disagreements and criticism, there has been little overt political activity associated with Buddhist communities in Britain. There were noisy protests against the Dalai Lama's 1996 visit by New Kadampa members who felt he was restricting their freedom of worship. In 2009 the Kingsbury Buddhist Temple was firebombed by suspected Tamil militants, targeting ethnic Singhalese rather than Buddhism. But these were both exceptional events.

Since Buddhism's ethical and social teachings are firmly opposed to Western materialism and individualism, we might expect a robust political response from the Buddhist community. This has very rarely been the case, partly because of the lack of a central Buddhist voice, but also due to a feeling that such activities generate more heat than light and are less important than personal spiritual practice. The Buddhist Society's constitution prevents it from officially supporting "any activity of a political nature" (www.thebuddhistsociety.org). The Forest Sangha is sometimes criticized for ignoring social problems, though monastics would argue that their engagement with the inner life provides a beneficial example in a materialistic society. Ajahn Sumedho has encouraged lay people to reflect on the causes of third world problems, and Roshi Kennett sometimes spoke out on social issues such as abortion or euthanasia; but neither of them would allow their monastic community to take part in active campaigning.

However, individuals and some groups have become involved with various forms of social action, ranging from simple kindness to political activism, which are collectively described as 'engaged Buddhism'. The Network of Engaged Buddhists, started in 1982 by British environmental and peace activists, describes itself as 'both affinity group and pressure group, attempting both personal and social transformation' (*Buddhist Directory*, 2000: 6).

Sandra Bell (2000: 407-15) has examined engaged Buddhism in Britain in detail under the headings of psychotherapy, social and environmental projects, and education. Psychotherapeutic initiatives include the Karuna Institute in Devon, offering professional training based on Buddhist psychology, and the Rokpa Trust's Lothlorien centre in Dumfriesshire, which supports people with mental health problems. Social and environmental projects include the Rigpa Fellowship's courses for the terminally ill and their professional and family carers, based on Sogyal Rinpoche's famous *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*; and the Buddhist Hospice Trust also aims 'to provide emotional and spiritual support for dying people and those close to them' (*Buddhist Directory*, 2003: 134). The Rokpa Trust has established soup kitchens and other support for homeless people; and Angulimala, the Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy Organization, works to make Buddhist teaching and practice available in prisons, with chaplains from all traditions. Educational organizations include the Dharma School in Brighton, which opened in 1994 as Britain's first Buddhist school (at present fee-paying and limited to younger pupils), and the Sharpham College of Buddhist Studies in Devon, which has offered adult education courses on Theravada, Zen and Tibetan Buddhist practice, and a residential course combining Buddhist studies with a "communal and meditative life" (*Buddhist Directory*, 2000: 99).

Several British writers on engaged Buddhism suggest that our over-consumption of resources will have adverse psychological effects as well as damaging the environment. Bell (2000: 418) concluded that most British Buddhists would agree, and that a greater willingness to engage with "social and political realities" showed increasing confidence amongst those working "to integrate Buddhism further into the mainstream of British society".

As regards internal social roles, there is comparatively little gender bias in British Buddhism, with both men and women becoming teachers in several traditions. Soto Zen rules even emphasize that gender equality is part of Buddhist teaching. However, most senior teachers are still men, and there has been a sense of discrimination in some traditions. Western lay women are sometimes uncomfortable with the Forest Sangha's patriarchal rules, and despite the nuns' more flexible regime, some tension remains between traditional practice and gender equality. The initial impetus for FWBO single-sex communities came from men whose attitudes seemed to ignore or exclude women, though this has faded as more women become ordained. Convert British Buddhists still tend to be middle-class and well-educated, often employed in teaching, medical or other caring professions; though there is wider social representation within Asian communities, and movements with large urban centres also attract a broader membership. It is worth remembering that young people who joined Buddhist organizations in the early years are now entering retirement. Some of the founders have died, and those who remain are elderly, so that these traditions are entering a crucial period where the leadership passes to a younger generation with more tenuous links to the Asian parent tradition.

Adaptation in Asian and Convert Forms

Asian Buddhists in Britain often maintain strong links with their individual countries, whose own Buddhist communities support British temples financially or by sponsoring monks from Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand, and occasionally Vietnam or Korea. The traditional iconography in such temples may be funded by wealthy Buddhists in Colombo or Bangkok rather than London or Birmingham. This flow of money and monastics is sometimes interrupted by political problems in Asian countries. In Tibet the process works almost in reverse, with British organizations dedicated to supporting refugees and preserving Tibetan spiritual and cultural life.

Most of the organizations catering for convert Buddhists in Britain retain links with Asian Buddhism, though in different ways. The Forest Sangha's position as a Western branch of Thai Theravada monasticism has sometimes limited its adaptation in Britain. Soka Gakkai has received significant funding from its Japanese parent organization, and the influence of Japanese leaders in Britain is not welcomed by all members. The mainstream Tibetan schools in Britain trace their lineages through ethnic Tibetan teachers who continue to support and inspire their British followers.

Other organizations have more tenuous links through their founders. Roshi Kennett was authorised by her Japanese Zen master to teach in the West, but the Soto Zen tradition is fully independent of Japanese support. Thich Nhat Hanh was exiled from his native Vietnam for many years. Sangharakshita is the only connection between the FWBO and Asian Buddhist teachers, though the movement is now also active in India, in an unusual re-exporting of Westernised Buddhism. (In 2010 the FWBO changed its name to the Triratna Buddhist Community to reflect its development outside Europe and its emphasis on the Three Jewels (Sanskrit *triratna*) of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.)

The process of change in British Buddhist organizations is more complex than a simple 'spectrum of adaptation' from a thoroughly traditional Forest Sangha to a wholly innovative FWBO. Although the Forest Sangha is a conservative Thai tradition following ancient monastic rules, there have been significant adaptations in Britain, including a new nuns' order, chanting in English as well as Pali, and enhanced roles for committed lay people. While the FWBO's selection and adaptation of elements from different schools is innovative, these elements themselves remain traditional.

In Tibetan Buddhism, Samye Ling has introduced temporary ordination for up to three years, full ordination for nuns, and various humanitarian, therapeutic and environmental activities. Presenting teaching in forms acceptable to Westerners reflects an individualized approach traditional in Tibet. Similarly in the New Kadampa, simplified teachings and practices with English translations are seen as a skilful re-presentation of traditional elements rather than adaptation.

Throssel Hole combines traditional Soto Zen ceremonial with adapted English language and music, in an attempt to establish a British Buddhist identity. Further adaptations from Japanese practice include a return to celibate monasticism, gender equality and equal emphasis on monastic and lay training. Soka Gakkai may appear markedly different from most Buddhist movements in Britain, but is relatively little changed from its Japanese parent movement.

Perhaps the most important overall change has been the participation of lay people. The Samatha Trust and Soka Gakkai are completely lay movements, and some monastic traditions are increasingly involving lay people as teachers or community members, sometimes in liminal roles where they can develop their own practice, support the monastic sangha, and perhaps prepare for ordination. Most local groups are run entirely by lay people, and many independent Buddhists practise with no contact with monastic communities.

Lay participation introduces the question of differences between convert and Asian forms of Buddhism in Britain. Asians often perceive the religion as a monastic core with support from the lay community, while converts tend to seek a new balance between monastic and lay practice which values both lifestyles equally. However, there are more obvious differences here. Visitors to the Buddhapadipa Temple in London will see traditional Thai architecture and iconography and hear Thai monks chanting in Pali; while in the FWBO London Buddhist Centre they will see statues and paintings by Western artists and usually hear only English spoken.

This is more than a cultural preference for Asian or Western decoration and language. Asian Buddhists in Britain, whether Thai or Sri Lankan or Chinese, may look for and expect the Buddhism they (or their parents or even grandparents) remember from their country of origin, where making offerings to the monastic community or the Buddha is often their central devotional practice. They usually see Buddhism as part of their cultural as well as religious identity, and while there are many committed practitioners, many others (particularly in the Chinese community) are perhaps comparable to those Christians whose church attendance centres on Christmas and Easter.

Converts who have chosen rather than inherited Buddhist practice are sometimes bewildered or irritated by Asian Buddhist symbolism and monastic ritual, which has no cultural value for them. Instead they expect monastics to be Dharma teachers and meditation instructors (and sometimes priests, social workers and psychotherapists too). While Asian Buddhists may make offerings to gain merit, and convert Buddhists may willingly support monastics, there is a grain of truth in the notion that Asians ask what they can give and Westerners ask what they can get. This suggests an underlying contrast between communal and individual approaches. Asian Buddhists value continuity with their religious and cultural roots, while converts (particularly those with a Christian background) are drawn by Buddhism's emphasis on correct practice based on personal responsibility, rather than correct belief reinforced by hierarchical structures.

Even in organizations which cater for both Asian and convert Buddhists, the two communities sometimes relate to the tradition in rather different ways. At Amaravati, for example, Thai supporters may come to offer a meal and pay their respects to Ajahn Sumedho, sitting some distance from him and bowing frequently; while Westerners may attend primarily to meditate or to

Amaravathi

hear the Ajahn speak, perhaps chatting informally with him afterwards.

Buddhism's Cultural and Educational Contribution

British-based writers and teachers have made a unique contribution to the wider understanding of Buddhism, either as Dharma teachers or as translators and academics. English translations of the Pali scriptures have been particularly influential here, from early versions by Rhys Davids to Maurice Walshe's *Long Discourses of the Buddha* (1987) which has become the standard English version of the *Digha Nikaya*. Influential books by Dharma teachers include the Ven. Walpola Rahula's *What the Buddha Taught* (1959), Chogyam Trungpa's *Meditation in Action* (1969), Reverend Master Jiyu-Kennett's *Selling Water by the River* (1972), Ven. Dr H. Saddhatissa's *Buddhist Ethics* (1987), Sangharakshita's *The Ten Pillars of Buddhism* (1984) and many other works, Akong Rinpoche's *Taming the Tiger* (1994) and Ajahn Sumedho's *The Mind and the Way* (1995) and *The Sound of Silence* (2007).

There has been a long tradition of the academic study of Buddhism in Britain. Rhys Davids became the first professor of Comparative Religion in 1904 at Manchester University. Since Conze's pioneering work, examples of more recent contributions by leading academics include Richard Gombrich's *Theravada Buddhism* (1988), Peter Harvey's *Introduction to Buddhism* (1990) and Damien Keown's *Dictionary of Buddhism* (2003). University Religious Studies departments often include undergraduate courses or modules on Buddhism and opportunities for postgraduate research. The Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies is "committed to the widespread diffusion of information about the Buddhist tradition that is at the same time academically sound and accessible to the non-expert" (*Buddhist Directory*, 2007: 106); and the UK Association for Buddhist Studies publishes the *Buddhist Studies Review* and acts as a further focus for research.

The iconography of Buddhism in Britain ranges from a small shrine in the corner of a bedroom to a large monastic complex, and includes many different styles. There are traditional Thai paintings in several Theravada temples, though the largest of these, the new Forest Sangha temple at Amaravati combines Thai imagery and architecture with an English vernacular style in a skilful blending of the two traditions. Samye Ling has a strong arts and crafts tradition to help preserve Tibetan culture. There is a massive and magnificent temple in traditional Tibetan style, with 1,000 golden Buddhas in scarlet cases around the walls, and traditional Tibetan wall paintings and *thankhas* (painted hanging scrolls), rather like Buddhist versions of medieval Christian narrative iconography. The New Kadampa Temple at Manjushri has images of the Buddha, Tsongkhapa and Dorge Shugden with Geshe Kelsang's photograph in front of them to show "the founder, reformer, protector and spiritual guide of the tradition portrayed together in a visual summary of the NKT's lineage and deity practice" (Bluck, 2008: 149). The New Century Hall at Soka Gakkai headquarters combines secular and religious functions with a sanctuary area where the Japanese shrine can be screened off for conferences and films. There is a rich artistic tradition in the FWBO with attempts to create a Western Buddhist art. At the London Buddhist Centre there are two large Buddha images which combine distinctly Western faces with "the stylised hair, elongated earlobes, monastic robes and lotus thrones of traditional Asian Buddhas" (Bluck, 2008: 167). Buddha statues and pictures of Buddhist monks have become more widely familiar in Britain and have been used in greetings cards, shop displays and television adverts as symbols of calmness, wisdom and compassion. It is a moot point as to whether such commercial activity promotes or dilutes the influence of Buddhism.

Current Challenges and Possible Futures

Although Buddhism has usually been seen as peaceable and tolerant in Britain, its development has not been without controversy. The FWBO, Soka Gakkai and New Kadampa have sometimes been labelled as "new Buddhist movements" and regarded with suspicion by some British Buddhists. Each of them has experienced a crucial separation from its Asian roots, through Sangharakshita leaving Theravada monasticism, Soka Gakkai's expulsion from Nichiren Shoshu, and Geshe Kelsang's rejection of mainstream Gelug Buddhism. They have used various methods of proselytizing, growing rapidly into the three largest Buddhist organizations in Britain, though together they only account for about one-tenth of British Buddhists. All have attracted criticism from the media and from within British Buddhism, and are variously described as evangelistic, dogmatic, exclusive and intolerant. However, the accuracy of such attacks and the motivation behind them are often open to question. All three movements could equally well be described as enthusiastic, committed and confident, usually with charismatic leadership. Such characteristics are commonly seen in new religious movements, often changing as they grow and mature. There is no clear dividing line between these three movements and more conventional Buddhist organizations in Britain.

Perhaps the most important challenge to Buddhism in Britain is that of isolation. With Asians and converts practising in many different traditions scattered across the country, as well as many practising independently, there is a risk that Buddhists have little contact with each other, so that friendly relations between traditions are not firmly established and maintained. There are exceptions here of course, with small-scale examples of Buddhists in particular places coming together for festivals or other events; but there can sometimes be several groups in the same area who are not even aware of each other's existence. This leads to a further challenge of Buddhists remaining invisible, so that interested people in contemporary Britain – like their Victorian forebears – tend to find out about Buddhism from books rather than from practising Buddhists.

Internal adaptations are taking place within a complex pattern which is beginning to blend Asian and Western cultural forms, and which includes conservative traditions and dynamic newer movements, with an ever greater involvement of lay people. There are significant differences in the spiritual practice, motivation and expectations of Asian and convert Buddhists in Britain, but also important features common to almost all traditions. These include: *silent meditation* as a central practice (apart from Soka Gakkai); *chanting* and other devotional activities; *traditional teachings* drawn from the Asian parent tradition (with elements combined in the FWBO); the study of *sacred texts* and contemporary writings; a programme of *courses and retreats*; a focus on the Buddha's life story and the *important narratives* of lives and teachings of later teachers and contemporary figures; a formal *ethical code* often based on the Five Precepts; some form of *teacher-pupil relationship* between leaders and members; mainly *Western teachers* (except for mainstream Tibetan traditions); and increasing *lay participation* within monastic traditions, or as lay movements or independent practitioners.

Buddhism in the West, and particularly in Britain, is unusual in having so many different traditions in one place. Theravada, Tibetan and Zen practitioners, who in Asia might have no contact with each other, now find themselves in the same town. The common features listed above may lead these different traditions towards each other; or they may continue to follow parallel but rather different paths. One tradition may eventually emerge as significantly larger than the others, though there are few clues as to the identity of this potentially predominant form. The integration of Asian communities into British society may reduce the differences between their Buddhist practice and that of converts, so that a form of genuinely British Buddhism develops.

This British Buddhism would need a common English vocabulary for Buddhist teaching and practice, rather than Pali or Sanskrit or Tibetan or Japanese terms. It would need Western teachers with full independence from Asian Buddhist organisations, yet with the active support of British Asian Buddhists. It might also need a social structure where ordination and lay practice were seen as equally valid paths; a cooperative spirit which seeks to evolve together rather than separately; and a truly representative voice which could speak authoritatively for the majority of Buddhists in Britain. Although many British practitioners see those in other Buddhist traditions as Dharma sisters and brothers, there is also a firm loyalty to their own tradition, which tends to resist change. With thirty different traditions of Asian and convert Buddhists, early predictions of the development of a uniquely 'British Buddhism' are unlikely to be fulfilled in the foreseeable future.

Note:

Some sections of this chapter have been adapted from my *British Buddhism* (Bluck, 2008) and an early draft of my contribution to the forthcoming *Religion and Change in Modern Britain* (London, Routledge, 2011).

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Buddhism in France and Belgium

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Introduction

France and Belgium are two French-speaking countries in Europe where Buddhism has rooted and become established in the last four decades, and where it has assumed both common features with other Western countries as well as very specific aspects owing to the cultural and political patterns of the histories of the host countries. Buddhist formations in France and Belgium are more or less the same encountered in other countries –Japanese and Vietnamese Zen traditions, Tibetan Vajrayana, and Southeast Asian Theravada. Both countries, also in common with others of the West, have witnessed the rise of new or modernist Buddhist movements; some have even been founded there. Thus Western countries in general have a diversification of religious and ethnic landscapes. And in both nations, more so than elsewhere, the legal status of Buddhism has raised crucial questions regarding its adaptation. In the European landscape of Buddhism, France (65 million inhabitants) and Belgium (11 million residents, officially multilingual and multicultural) epitomize two major countries (alongside Germany and Great Britain) where Buddhism has settled in culturally and religiously prevalent Christian (Roman Catholic) surroundings.

The contemporary situation of Buddhism in France and Belgium is a vogue topic that has received much media coverage, especially since the late 1980s. Scholars, however, paid attention to the presence of Buddhism in France as early as the 1990s and in Belgium a decade later. They hence started to provide quantitative data (opinion polls), qualitative case studies based upon ethnographic inquiries, and, to a certain extent, detailed historical accounts. Yet academic knowledge is still fragmentary and lacks decisive and reliable information that would allow the chance to portray an accurate sketch of the history and the situation of Buddhism in these two countries (especially Belgium). The current-day information nevertheless provides important clues to the understanding of the diverse ways and forms of Buddhism in the French-speaking countries of Europe, and the very specific political conditions and cultural settings to which it had to adapt.

Origins

Given their geographic closeness and cultural propinquity, France and Belgium share a common history in the wider process of the westward spread of Buddhism. In the case of Europe, the westward path has its roots in ancient contact between the Greek and Indian civilizations. The impact of these early encounters on the reception of Asian religions in the European region is, from an historical point of view, difficult to determine – it might be somewhat undervalued or, quite the reverse, overestimated. Historical material remains too dispersed to account for a significant impact of these early contacts on the succeeding process of discovery, interpretation and welcoming of Buddhism in Western Europe, especially in French speaking countries. More documented contacts between the "East" and "West" (two categories pertaining to moral geographies framed in Europe's imagination of "the Otherness", which gave birth to orientalism) occurred in the thirteenth century, at the heart of the Middle Ages. Ironically, it all started in a context in which the Greek ideological "openness" to the world and interest in Asian cultures and religions had switched to Medieval Europe's repulsion for non-Christian cultures. France and what was not yet Belgium (politically independent in the nineteenth century) played a crucial but paradoxical role in these encounters. The first travellers who reached Mongolia and reported their encounters with local religious traditions, especially Buddhism, were born in France or in French-speaking regions, or were sent from France by Roman Catholic authorities. This is the case with three pioneers in the European discovery of Asia and its religions, namely Jean de Plan Carpin (1180-1252, born in Italy, left from Lyon, France), William of Rubruck (1215-1295, born in French Flanders,), André de Longjumeau (?-1270, born in France). All of them gave accounts of the religious life of Asian "barbarians" and all found objectionable their beliefs and cultic habits. But each of them was similarly fascinated by the undisputable strength and depth of the faith of these believers, who were not yet labeled Buddhists. This French tradition of religious explorers endured until the nineteenth century and the travel of Father Huc in Asia. In the seventeenth century, France had diplomatic relationships and brief colonial settlements in the Kingdom of Siam (Thailand) in the era of the establishment of Theravada Buddhism as the official religion. But the French had, nevertheless, little knowledge of this religion at the time.

Centuries before France encountered South-Asia Buddhism on its own soil, the religion was witnessed during colonial expansion in Southeast Asia, where French missionaries had first settled as early as 1663. The colonial conquest, however, began in 1858 within the regions of Annam, Tonkin, and Cochinchina (Vietnam), Laos (which became a French protectorate) and Cambodia (likewise), and ended in 1907 when the definitive frontiers of French Indochina were established after years of wars with neighboring countries and China. In the mid-1950s, the French withdrew from Vietnam and other countries of Indochina, but French culture and language remained influential for decades, and in the 1970s, when refugees fled from civil wars in Southeast Asia, many of them logically chose to settle in France.

Another major role of France and Belgium lies in the sequence of the westward path of Buddhism: the nineteenth century discovery and intellectual reception of Buddha's spiritual teachings. The history of Buddhism in France hence dates back to the nineteenth century with an academic controversy on the nature and the reception of the newly discovered religion. Throughout the nineteenth century, European intellectuals discussed the nature of Buddhism, and in France, many distinguished authors - scholars in Asian or religious studies, philosophers or simple writers - engaged in this debate.

The intellectual interest in Buddhism gave rise to the foundation of Buddhist studies as early as 1820-1830, when Buddhist themes and practices were identified as parts of a single and particular religious system different from other Asian traditions previously known in the West, such as Hinduism. The term *Bouddhisme* ("Buddhism") was coined in the French language in the early nineteenth century by a little-known author, Michel-François Ozeray. It was later revised by the French-Swiss intellectual Benjamin Constant (1767-1830) as *Bouddhaïsme* ("Buddhaism"). It was eventually adapted as "Bouddhisme" after the publication of Eugène Burnouf's masterpiece and the foundation of Buddhist studies.

As the first (and French) author to devote his studies and to write a book on this newly discovered religion, Eugene Burnouf (1801-1852) became the pioneer founder of this field of knowledge located at the crossroads of Asian studies and religious studies. Burnouf paved the way for generations of scholars in Buddhist studie, and France was prominent in the field until the second half of the twentieth century, when it slowly declined.

Roger-Pol Droit, a French philosopher, has traced the detailed history of the reception and conception of Buddhism in intellectual circles in Europe in the nineteenth century, and placed emphasis on the fact that Buddhism, in the European and French imagination, quickly shifted in only one century from repulsion to fascination. But the "*question bouddhique*" (the influential controversy regarding the identity of Buddhism) in Europe and France was mainly an intellectual one and the adoption of Buddhism as faith and practice first happened in the United States and Great Britain.

Despite the existence of Buddhist temples in Switzerland from as early as1910-1920, interest towards Buddhism in France remained purely intellectual until the second half of the twentieth century, and like elsewhere in Europe, rooted in intellectual circles and societies. One of the most important of the latter was the Société des Amis du Bouddhisme (Friends of Buddhism Society) founded in 1929 by the American-born Gabrielle Constant-Lounsbery. This society had a close relationship with the Theosophical Society, which played a crucial role in the reception of Buddhism in the West, but quickly turned into an intellectually autonomous circle. Theravada was the first tradition under consideration at the Société, but Tibetan Buddhism became more prominent. In the first half of the twentieth century, inside the Société or with isolated individuals, Buddhism was both an object of study and an object of fascination but not an object of faith and practice. Maurice Magre's self-confession *Pourquoi je suis Bouddhiste* ("Why I am a Buddhist"), published in 1928, is an exceptional statement of the time.

The fascination with Buddhism was nourished by images of remote and authentic cultures and spiritual traditions of Asia, especially India and Tibet (for rather different reasons). In France, Tibetan Buddhism became fashionable in the first half of the twentieth century, and remains so today. Asian countries have been constructed as "magical" and "mystical" for centuries in Europe, but in the late nineteenth century / early twentieth century, Tibet became the center of this projective and imaginary moral geography, especially because of its physical remoteness and its image as a "forbidden land" in the West. Alexandra David-Néel (1868-1969) was one of the major promoters of Buddhism in its Tibetan version in France. A former opera singer, the Belgian-French explorer travelled the Himalayas and reached Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, in 1924, when the country was barely accessible to Westerners. She wrote her first book on Tibet, *Voyage d'une Parisienne à Lhasa* ("Travel of a Parisian Women in Lhasa") in 1927, and became the prolific author of no less than twenty-five books on the subject. It is worth mentioning that her residence in the French Alps (bought in 1828) was turned into a Buddhist sanctuary in 1977. David-Néel was instrumental in constructing an idealized imaginary figuration of Tibet and its religion. She played an indirect role in the adoption of Tibetan Buddhism in France. While she was not actually a missionary or zealous promoter (she considered herself a scholar in Asian studies and a writer) she was – and still is – an inspiring source for those who are fascinated by Buddhism in northern Asia and Tibet. To a certain extent, David-Néel is the corresponding figure of Lobsang Rangpa (British born, self-designed as a "Tibetan lama") at least for the description of Buddhist *virtuosi* owning magical superpowers. But David-Néel was a real traveler, even if some historians contest the reality of the narrative accounts of her trips, and consequently what she reported about Himalayan Buddhist supernaturalism. These literary developments characterize the status of Buddhism in France from the turn of the twentieth century until the years following World War Two. Western literary products of this historical sequence contributed to the promotion of Buddhism: the ideological or imaginary conditions were more and more fulfilled for the acceptance and consequently the reception of Buddhism in France, at the time when the "Elder Daughter of the Catholic Church" (as France is called) was engaging in a process of secularization.

Developments

Accordingly, the first half of the twentieth century did not witness any major impetus in the diffusion and settlement of Buddhism. These Buddhist societies and the admirers of Buddhism were not groups of practitioners, but they did play a crucial role in the diffusion of Buddhist ideas, and translators for making these themes (the key concepts of Buddhism) available and acceptable. But Buddhist traditions (i.e. religious institutions) were not firmly rooted in France and Belgium before the second half of the twentieth century. A shift from an intellectual to a more practical approach to Buddhism occurred at the time. Major developments did not occur before the 1960s and 1970s when Zen and Tibetan masters began to travel in Europe (and America) to spread the Buddhist message of enlightenment. The Zen and Tibetan 'booms' of the 1960s and 1970s led to the first successful attempts to establish traditions exported from Asia beyond imported decontextualized beliefs or symbols. Zen and Tibetan masters began touring Europe and the West for rather different reasons. The Tibetans are said to have been primarily motivated by the necessity to preserve their culture and religion threatened by the political takeover and annexation of Tibet by China in 1951 and by the mass escape of Tibetan religious elites to India in 1959 following the exile of the fourteenth Dalai Lama. Contrary to Switzerland, neither France nor Belgium has welcomed communities of Tibetan exiles. In France, they amount to 200 to 250 individuals, scattered throughout the country, and they hardly participate in the settlement of their religion. The worldwide touring Tibetan masters were supposed to counterbalance the menace of eradication of religious and cultural traditions in their own country by spreading and resettling their monastic institutions abroad. Actually, the Tibetan masters were also motivated by missionary aims, just like their Japanese counterparts, who also toured Europe and North America in the same decades, in a context where Buddhism was highly appealing to Westerners. The missionary activism of Asian masters nevertheless couldn't succeed without a similar involvement of converts and sympathizers.

The example of Belgium is, in this case, edifying. Robert Linssen (1911-2004), an influential intellectual figure and an early promoter of Buddhism in Belgium, was the first to establish the Friends of Buddhism Association (Association des Amis du Bouddhisme) in the first half of the twentieth century. But it was R Lievens who set up the first *Maison du Bouddhisme* ("Buddhist House") in 1961 and who was also connected with other societies of Buddhist sympathizers in France, especially the Société des Amis du Bouddhisme, with the assistance of a Belgian Buddhist sympathizer, Raymond Kiene (1897-1981). In the masterwork edited by the orientalist René de Berval, *Présence du Bouddhisme,* in 1959 (and regularly re-edited since then), Adrian Peel was the first scholar to sketch the outlines of Buddhist developments in Belgium – mainly in academic circles. Five decades later, the history of Buddhism has dramatically changed regarding the processes of diffusion and/or importation. In France, the 1970s were the years of dissemination and expansion. The 1980s were the years of consolidation and institutionalization. The first major temples were founded – including Dashang Kagyu Ling, the largest Tibetan Buddhist temple of Europe, in 1974, the Temple de la Gendronnière (Zen) in 1980, and the "Plum village", founded by Thich Naht Hanh in 1982.

Buddhist meditation centers have increased in number and expanded in all regions of France and Belgium. Yet Buddhism did not only reach these two countries by means of importation and fascination. It has also been due to "transport" or "migrant" Buddhism. This is more especially the case with France, a country with colonial relationships with South-East Asian countries (Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam previously included in the "Indochina" area), and Buddhism has also settled as an "ethnic" religion, by means of migration or the flow of refugees in the second half of the twentieth century. As a consequence, Buddhist traditions have also rooted in France and Belgium, but expressly, if not exclusively, due to a population of expatriates for which religion played a role for the strengthening of social bonds and moral connection within communities of migrants. In the first half of the twentieth century, however, people of Asian origin first came to France as individual workers or students for temporary residence, especially in the interwar period. Few of them remained in the country, and they were not motivated by the attempt to relocate their cultic practices in their host countries. In the middle of the 1970s, the aftermath of war in Cambodia and Vietnam generated a massive flow of refugees. In the early 1980s, they amounted to around 50,000 people, 36,000 being Laotian. They were followed by Chinese and other groups of Asian ethnic origin (Thai, for instance). They resettled, driven by the need to assure a cultural continuity to newly displaced and reformed communities abroad. In this context, religion played a key role in giving sense to expatriation and diaspora. The arrangement of places of worship and the invitation of monks / priests were among the primary efforts they devoted to ensure cultural continuity.

Although the first "convert" Buddhist temple (Tibetan-oriented) to be built in France dates back to the late 1960s, "Asian" Buddhism is still nowadays demographically dominant in Belgium and France. Nonetheless, we lack relevant demographic figures on Buddhist in these two countries, and the numbers of Buddhist there are just estimations – no central institution has ever planned an exhaustive census (which is difficult to evaluate, anyway, since the basis of "belonging" in Buddhism is controversial for both scholars and practitioners (see Current State of Affairs). The number of temples and sanctuaries built for a "convert" Buddhist audience is nevertheless much higher than those devoted to cultic practices for Asian "native" Buddhists. In France, the number of Buddhist temples quickly increased in number, from one identified (Tibetan) temple in the late 1960s, to recent estimations of around 400 Buddhist temples or "meditation centers". An "ethnic" distinction between Buddhist traditions is obvious in both countries. Tibetan and Japanese Buddhist organizations embrace two-thirds or more of the ("convert") followers of Buddhism, while the few "ethnic" pagodas embrace the (vast) majority of "Asian" Buddhists.

Impacts on Literature, Education, and the Arts

Decades after David-Néel, Arnaud Desjardins, a French writer, film director, and Hindu convert, made a series of television documentaries on different religious traditions. His 1966 *Le message des Tibétains* ("Message of the Tibetans"), also published as a book the same year, had a profound influence on French audiences. He also directed documentaries on Zen Buddhism in the early 1970s (*Zen: Ici et Maintenant*, "Zen: Here and Now", and *Zen: Partout et toujours*, "Zen: Everywhere and Always", but with lower impact. In the meantime, Buddhism has become fashionable: it has widened its audience, and Buddhist ideas and practices have expanded in different segments of French-speaking societies in Europe. Opinion polls conducted in both countries have revealed that Buddhism is as an all-encompassing category without distinction between schools and traditions. In France, for instance, an opinion poll (CSA/La Vie) in 1990 revealed that Buddhism was the preferred spirituality of the French, especially for the young generation. In the late 1990s, according to another opinion poll, around five million of a population of 65 million were supposed to have moral proximity with Buddhism. Since the early 1990s, French (mostly) and Belgian (more seldom) press and mass media devoted innumerable articles and special issues on Buddhism. Aside from the substantial media coverage of Buddhism in France, it is worth noting that a confessional journal, written and published by French Buddhists and targeting a Buddhist audience (practitioners or sympathizers), was created in 1999. *Bouddhisme Actualités* ("Buddhism News") is a pluriconfessional periodical, in which all monastic traditions are represented, but which remains more or less confidential. In the French context, Buddhism has also succeeded in acquiring official recognition, at least culturally speaking. Remarkably, Buddhism has indeed been allocated a thirty-minute television program during the Sunday morning confessional broadcastings, "Voix Bouddhistes" (Buddhist Voices), alongside Judaism, Islam, and Protestantism.

The impact of Buddhism on mainstream culture is more visible yet still rather dispersed. As for education, after Eugène Burnouf, other scholars, researching in different directions, have made France an important place for the development of Buddhist studies.

Belgian scholars also played an important role in the academic understanding of Buddhism: Louis de la Vallée Poussin (1869-1938) was among the distinguished Belgian indologists to engage in the controversy about Buddhism. In the twentieth century, Christian scholars became more involved in the study of Buddhism in both France and Belgium, and some injected confessional issues into Buddhist studies. The French theologian Henri de Lubac (1896-1991), an expert in religion in general and Christianity in particular, also produced the very first authoritative work on Buddhism in the West: *La Rencontre du Bouddhisme et de l'Occident* ("The Encounter between Buddhism and the West"), published in 1952. The title has been copied many times since, for instance by the sociologist Frederic Lenoir in his 1999 volume, and has fashioned a new genre in Buddhist and religious studies. Another famous theologian and Buddhologist is Etienne Lamotte (1903-1983). A Belgian scholar and (Christian) priest, he wrote the masterpiece *Le Bouddhisme, des Origines à l'ère Saka,* published in 1976. The counterpart to this tradition of (French-Belgian) theologian-scholars interested in Buddhism are the Sinologists like Paul Pelliot (1878-1945), Henri Maspéro (1883-1945), Marcel Granet (1884-1940) and Paul Demieville (1894-1979), but also indologists like Sylvain Lévi (1863-1935), Louis Renou (1896-1966) and Jean Filliozat (1906-1982), who contributed to a better knowledge of Buddhism, mainly in its scriptural form. Their works paved the way for the establishment of a renowned tradition of Buddhist studies with a "civilizational" perspective. New generations of scholars in Buddhism succeeded the first generation of pioneers, and the French-speaking countries of Europe enjoyed a leading position in Buddhist studies until the 1960s and 1970s. Unfortunately, due to significant changes in the research and university systems, scholars' curricula in Buddhist languages and scriptures declined and in early 2010, Buddhist studies almost disappeared from the academic landscape of these two countries – only a handful of universities offer training in Asian languages and religions. In Belgium, the universities of Louvain-La-Neuve, Leuwen, and Brussels still have curricula in religious and Asian studies, where some courses are devoted to Buddhism. In France, the Institut des Langues Orientales in Paris, the fifth section of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes and above all, the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient (both located in Paris) also provide courses about Buddhism, but philology and exegesis have become less important than historical and anthropological perspectives. The scientific study of Buddhism, however, did not vanish but has been relocated in other disciplinary fields, such as history and anthropology (for Buddhism in Asia) and sociology and political sciences (for Buddhism in the West). Buddhist studies have had a lower impact on arts and literature than more voluminous and romanticized writings about Buddhism that have spectacularly prospered after A David-Néel, unambiguously targeting a wider audience than intellectual circles. This "democratization" of Buddhism allowed non-Buddhist individuals and organizations to reinvent both Buddhism and their own religiosity since the 1970s. On the one hand, Buddhists have started to write their own books on the religion, and on the other, intellectuals not specialized in Asian religions, and also sympathizers, followed this line in publishing many essays on Buddhism. The tradition of Shakyamuni gained a wider audience each year, and Buddhist ideas and symbols, previously limited to circles of scholars, spread out in different segments of French and Belgian societies.

Emerging discreetly in the twenty-first century, Buddhist-inspired children education models (non-authoritarian, based on self-analysis, dialog and understanding) have been promoted in France by pediatric specialists. Yet they remain confined to advice for families, and, to the contrary of "official" religions (Christianity Judaism and Islam) no "Buddhist school" has been founded in France – the study and practice of Buddhism for adherents is mainly located in the context of communities and institutions (sangha). The Buddhist contribution to arts is not exactly influential – but to a certain extent, Buddhist themes and symbols have penetrated the aesthetics of teenage fashion, popular music and cinema. Yet they are dispersed in France and Belgium and do not always adhere to Buddhist values: Buddhist icons and symbols appear in a vast array of sectors – fashion (Buddha figures on T-shirts), music (a popular song in France is entitled "Zen soyons zen" – Zen, let's be zen), food (eating in the "Buddhist way", i.e. safely and for well-being, has become a trendy habit among the elite), advertising (monks appear in TV ads), and so on.

More noticeable is the Buddhist contribution to the more recent and timelier debate on the nature of science. Buddhist masters and intellectuals have contributed to the discussion on the boundaries between science and religion, and attempted to emphasize the very rational nature of Buddhism and its propinquities with natural sciences. In France, Mathieu Ricard, a former researcher in biology, converted to Tibetan Buddhism and is the official translator for the fourteenth Dalai-Lama when he travels in French-speaking countries, is actively involved in the dialogue of Buddhism and science. One of his most famous books, co-written with his father, the eminent philosopher Jean-François Revel, is titled *The Monk and the Philosopher* ("Le Moine et le Philosophe",

1999) in which he pursued the nineteenth dialogue between Buddhism and the humanities. In the same vein, but in a different discipline, a book was published of the discussions with the researcher in astrophysics Trinh Xuan Thuan (*L'infini dans la paume de la main*, Paris: Fayard, 2000). Notwithstanding the success of these books (among others published by traditional Buddhist masters), the practice of natural sciences or humanities in France and Belgium has not been profoundly influenced by Buddhist ideas. Only one organization, the *Université Bouddhiste Européenne* (European Buddhist University), a university-like school of Buddhist studies founded in 1996 in Paris, is an independent organization for Buddhist studies and humanities where all teachers are Buddhists, and what is dispensed is a non-confessional instruction in Buddhism.

Politics and Relationships to Society

As mentioned, Buddhism in France and in Belgium is divided into "ethnic" or "Asian" traditions, on the one side, and "convert" or "White" organizations on the other, a situation which is very similar to what has occurred in other Western countries. It is important to note that this social and cultural distinction is more than the scholars' categorization of the forms of Buddhism in the landscapes of its host countries, but an empirically obvious partition since these two forms of Buddhism scarcely join and intermingle. Occasionally, Buddhist groups share the same place and join together for religious festivities, as is the case for the pagoda of the Bois de Vincennes (Theravada), near Paris, and its neighboring Tibetan temple (Kagyu Dzong). But such initiatives remain rare, and Buddhist's ecumenical efforts in France and Belgium are addressed to the historical and official religions (Christianity, Judaism, and more seldom, Islam).

The relationship to society between "ethnic" and "convert" Buddhist groups are accordingly rather dissimilar: in the cultural integration and social/ideological adjustment to host societies for "ethnic" Buddhists, and the indigenization and adaptation of Buddhism to the lifestyles and cultural habits of French and Belgians for "convert" Buddhists. In both cases, one of the major issues concerns the tolerance to Buddhism as a foreign religion in France and Belgium. "Assimilation" was the dominant political principle in France for foreign residents until the twenty-first century. Despite a slow turn toward the political and social recognition of multiculturalism and religious pluralism, "foreign" ethnic and religious groups are still considered as minorities and inclined to be stigmatized.

France is a country where the principle of *laïcité* (secularism) applies. The standard of *laïcité* supposes that State support (economic and political) for religion is (virtually) non-existent, that religious belief and preference are a "private affair" (that cannot be expressed in public spaces and contexts) and that the manifestations of confessional belonging are banned in public, in particular if they contradictory to the values of the French *République* (freedom, equality, fraternity). Buddhism therefore needed to align with these standards.

As for "Asian" Buddhism - mostly South-East Asian Theravada traditions - the main challenge was an issue in *integration*. By integration, we mean social and cultural integration of migrants and their descendants, for to a certain extent the integration of people from Asian origin in France is paradoxically partially effective. It has been effective in a sense, since the offspring of the first generation of migrants have mostly accessed higher education levels and career opportunities in France. But the Asian communities also live in (re)located communities, grouped in certain contexts (mainly large urban cities) and in certain areas (suburbs or sub-districts), where they sometimes form a sort of "ghetto" called "Chinatown". The political conditions of their migration, diversity of motives to migrate, the country of origin, the cultural uprooting they faced, the continuous pressure for integration, and even racism they are the target of, make migrants, especially Asians, more sensitive to community bonds they reproduce in a faraway country. And religion assumes, in such a context of expatriation, the experience of "Otherness" and the feeling of culture loss, a decisive role in rebuilding or consolidating social/community bonds, the sense of ethnicity and shared beliefs, by means of collective rituals under the authority of a monk. The "ethnic" pagodas or viharas in France are therefore among the most significant and powerful symbolic and social spaces for the persistence or rebirth of cultural heritage for migrants and their children. This is, for instance, the case for the community of Vietnamese in the city of Fréjus in the south of France, who have built one of the largest pagodas in the country and arrange religious events, as well as festivals such as the ceremony of the *Têt*. The Cambodians of the north-west region around the city of Rennes are much more scattered and arrived in much harsher conditions (escaping the violence of civil war in their country of origin as boat-people) but eventually achieved the foundation of temples for a local community of Khmers. Similarly, the Lao people in the suburbs of Paris, where 40% of the migrant population in France reside, who also arrived in the 1970s, have managed to arrange places of worship. Issues in international politics and activism are rather discreet among the Asian Buddhists.

The situation is rather different for "convert" Buddhism, mainly represented by Mahayana traditions of Zen and Tibetan Buddhism. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Buddhism was embedded in the images of counter-culture movements, and was considered a strange and unconventional spirituality, chosen by people with lifestyles and ideological options at the fringe of the mainstream cultures of France and Belgium. But during the same decades, practitioners slowly but constantly increased in number, and Buddhist recruitment enlarged to other social strata. Buddhism not only became more democratic, but turned out to be a fashionable spirituality. Actually, Buddhist ideas have been continuously adjusted to the cultural and ideological changes of European countries, so matching new social ideals: Buddhism was fitting the emerging modern cultural model of *Homo economicus* (as stated by Serge-Christophe Kolm, in 1982), a byproduct of Europe's path to modernity. In the 1980s and 1990s, Buddhism consequently encompassed the concept of being an *alternative* religion for modern societies, an accurately modern (i.e. "Western") spirituality. The focus upon personal achievement, freedom, spiritual choice, and a certain rational thought that Buddhist traditions emphasized, echoed the values of the modern religious seeker. In Europe in general, and more explicitly in France, the cultural model of individualism has been, and still is, the main framework by which Buddhism has been understood and interpreted.

The followers of Buddhism have increased in number, and the issue of "conversion" has become more openly discussed with the coming together of communities and the construction of temples. The issue of cults or sects in France and Belgium, especially those inspired by Asian spiritualities ("neo-oriental" groups), which emerged in the 1970s, turned out to be a political and social problem. The groups labeled as sects, i.e. religious minorities with strong leadership ("gurus"), indefectible faith in the beliefs of the community, and imposing social/physical boundaries with the rest of society, were targeted. In 1996, the publication of the first parliamentary report – the Gest and Guyard Report on the sects in France - first listed a series of religious groups or movements assumed to be "dangerous" to society, and discussed the mental balance of their practitioners. The report drew attention to the significant number of sectarian groups inspired by Asian and Buddhist spiritualities. Among this minority of allegedly "sectarian" Buddhist groups, some claimed to have official recognition from Asian Buddhist institutions. The International Zen Association is one of the main Buddhist organizations targeted by the sect report. The self-labeled "new religions" (Japanese *shinshukyo*) or "new religious movements", with explicit schismatic intentions regarding their traditional and monastic backgrounds, are more likely to adopt a sectarian attitude. This is especially the case with the Japanese Soka Gakkai International (SGI), which has settled in France by means of aggressive proselyte strategies. In the early years of settlement in the 1980s, the SGI followers rejected vehemently the possibility of practicing and belonging to several religions, and were alleged to destroy the symbols of other religious traditions, even Buddhist ones. With these unequivocal conversionist aims and the exclusive "belonging" of the members, the SGI was suspected of sectarianism and being a "pariah" Buddhism (to borrow the sociologist Louis Hourmant's expression). More recently, stigmatized by society and other Buddhist groups, the SGI leaders and followers have adjusted their relationship to other confessional groups and surrounding secular society by adopting a more relaxed attitude. The repeated attacks of State administrations and the anti-sect campaign by the MIVILUDES (a governmental organization created in 2002 for the surveillance and defense against sectarian phenomena), can undoubtedly explain the modification of SGI strategies. In Belgium, the first Tibetan-oriented Buddhist center was founded by Robert Spatz, also known as lama Kunzan Dorje, who created the Ogyen Kunzang Chöling organization (with extensions in France), listed as a sect in the parliamentary reports of France and Belgium.

Issues in the transplantation of Buddhism go far beyond the sect controversy and the extensive media-coverage it has received in the three last decades, the reality of Buddhism in France and Belgium is above all the presence of traditional institutions of Tibetan, Zen and Theravada monasticism. But the relocation of these ancient traditions is not free of internal tensions, conflicts, and contestations of authority. The majority of Buddhist groups affiliated to monastic structures are headquartered in Asian countries and depend on the Japanese, Tibetan or Korean authorities, and the French / Belgian sites can be a theater of conflict imported from Asia. The Tibetans of France have, for instance, experienced two major disputes that exemplify how the internal and political tensions of Buddhist monasticism in the countries of origin have been transferred to host countries, and even impose on the shaping of a diverse but competitive Buddhist landscape in France and Belgium. What is known as the "Karmapa controversy" is a first suggestive example, which occurred when two young Tibetan reincarnated masters (*tulku*) were recognized at the same time in Tibet as the personification of the late Karmapa, the head of the powerful Karma-Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. The French Buddhist organizations affiliated to the Karma-Kagyu school had split into two opposite camps: the supporters of Orgyen Trinley Dorje (under the patronage of the Dashang Kagyu Ling congregation, one of the most important in France: see www.kagyuoffice-fr.org/17e_karmapa/) and those of Trinley Thaye Dorje (with the sponsorship of the Dhagpo Kagyu Ling, another leading congregation in France: see www.dhagpo-kagyu.org/france/). Whatever the sincerity of the reasons to favor one Karmapa against another, this case is instructive and has also been mentioned by skeptics as evidence that the Buddhist milieu in France was not corresponding to the "harmonious" and "peaceful" images it promotes for itself, and on the internet there are sites devoted to the claims and contestations of both sides (karmapa.controverse.free.fr/preambule-2.html). There was another notable controversy surrounding Tibetan Buddhism in France regarding the New Kadampa Tradition. Founded in 1991 by a Tibetan monk, Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, this sub-school, nowadays organized as an international trust (The International Kadampa Buddhist Union), devotes cultic and meditative practices to a divinity, Dorje Shugden, that has been banned by the fourteenth Dalai Lama for religious reasons (the negative effects of this practice on the Dharma). The conflict between the leader of the Tibetans and the newly founded sub-school led to a bitter schism and since then the New Kadampa Tradition has excluded itself from the tutelary authority of the Dalai Lama, whose images have been proscribed in their meditation centers. Followers are in the challenging situation of being Buddhists but excluded from Tibetan institutions, and at the same time considered a sect by the French government. The New Kadampa Tradition is nevertheless still expanding, with around forty centers and temples on French soil, and presents itself as a tradition of "true Dharma" (kadampa.org/fr/). These examples reveal that Buddhist traditions settled in France have also exported their own institutional tensions, and that Buddhism in France and Belgium is also not free of competitive strategies between traditions with the same origin. The establishment of Buddhism in French-speaking Europe is consequently a complex process with many facets, and the internal conflicts within Buddhism itself are not a minor aspect of this process.

Buddhism's Contribution to France and Belgium

Given its status as a minority religion, Buddhism's contribution to France and Belgium is not well-circumscribed and always palpable. Nevertheless, Buddhist ideas and practices infuse various segments of society with different rhythms. The influence of Buddhism is more pronounced in the religious and therapeutic fields than in any other. Indeed, beyond the impact of Buddhist ideas and practices among the thousands of adherents (see below), be they converts, Asian migrants or descendants, Buddhist self-fulfillment and ascetic techniques have become so widespread since the 1980s that they quickly overflowed the boundaries of intellectual circles and communities of practitioners, and penetrated the fields of "therapy" and "well-being". The location of Buddhism on the therapeutic edge is linked to the fact that, as early as the 1960s, it was considered as a (spiritual) remedy for the "ailments of modern societies". As such, it turned out to epitomize a kind of "societal therapy", following the intellectual tradition of René Guénon, a famous orientalist writer inspired by Asian spiritualities and later converted to Islam, according to whom the modern world was "in crisis" (*La Crise du Monde Moderne*, published in 1927) and could be "cured" by borrowing the Orient's "antique traditions". And still, Buddhism is nowadays conceived in France as a "solution" for those who are "deceived" both by modernity and by "historical" religions – Christianity and, to a certain extent, Judaism. More pragmatically, Buddhism and other Asian spiritualities also provided worldviews and above all techniques captured by alternative therapeutic groups or movements, especially those usually included in the broad (though imprecise) category of "New Age". Indeed, Buddhist techniques (inner meditation, control of breath, mental quietness, visualizations, mindfulness, etc.) and the related lifestyles (diet, prohibition of intoxicants, vegetarianism, etc.) echo contemporary preoccupations towards health, and infused so-called alternative or non-conventional medicines. Yoga, considered in its meditative form, has become a widespread technique far beyond the soteriological meaning it assumes in the context of a monastic community (sangha). The socioeconomic sector of "well-being" and "happiness" largely borrows techniques of Buddhist asceticism (above all, meditation), and the label "Buddhist" has turned into a stylish brand. But Buddhism is not only a topical item for the moral and bodily comfort of healthy people, but it is also seen as a kind of "medicine" able to cope with highly-developed countries' contemporary troubles (anxiety, moral troubles, etc.). Buddhist-inspired techniques nowadays serve as psychotherapeutic responses to the ailments of Western ("modern") societies in a vast movement of development of alternatives and "soft" medicines.

Current State of Affairs

For France, as for Belgium, there is a lack of reliable quantitative data on Buddhists. This is due to many reasons. First, ethnic and religious statistics are not officially permitted (being potentially discriminatory), and even illegal in the national census. And second, the Buddhist organizations themselves do not possess consistent figures.

Asian migrants in France number between 400,000 and 600,000 individuals (official estimations), and those who originate from Buddhist countries (or countries where Buddhism was practiced) come mainly from Vietnam, Cambodia, China, Laos, and Thailand. But not all of the Asians are Buddhists - Indians, for instance, number around 180,000 and practice Hinduism, and Pakistanis are Muslims.

In France, Buddhists are nowadays (2010) estimated to number between 750,000 and 800,000. Most of them (perhaps two-thirds) are "Asian" or of Asian extraction. French Buddhists are divided by sociologists into subcategories or demographic "circles". "Real" converts (who are fully engaged in Buddhism and in a community or sangha) possibly number in excess of 10,000 (who do not necessarily "belong" to a sangha, but practice more or less regularly under the guidance of a Buddhist master), and sympathizers (who do not attend Buddhist sanghas but have adopted Buddhist ideas, or express a moral "nearness" or an ethical "convenience" with them). Sympathizers or "Buddhist-friendly" people in France are estimated to be approximately five million. These figures situate France at the forefront of European countries in terms of the demography of Buddhists.

According to statistical evaluations by observers and scholars, the demographics of Buddhits in Belgium waver between lower approximations, from 10,000 to 20,000, to higher ones, from 30,000 to 40,000. Buddhists in Belgium represent less than 0.1% of the total population (0.9 %), while in France the rate is ten times higher (1.23%). The striking difference between the two countries cannot be explained by reference to religious parameters. Indeed, in both countries, Roman Catholicism is dominant and Buddhism a newly arrived religious minority.The organization of Buddhism is still polarized between an "ethnic" Buddhism, on the one side, and a "convert" Buddhism on the other, despite the increase in the numbers of "White" followers, "Asian" Buddhists still outweigh them. But "convert" Buddhism is very widespread.

Zen traditions are represented by different schools. The Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh has established the headquarters of his organization, l'Ordre de l'Interêtre ("The Order of Interbeing"), at the Village des Pruniers. The Japanese Soto school is mainly represented by the International Zen Association (Association Zen Internationale) founded by Taisen Deshimaru (1914-1982), who established its headquarters in France at the Temple de la Gendronnière. The Japanese Rinzai tradition, faithful to the lineage of Hakuin (1685-1768) is well-represented in both countries. The Sambo Kyodan school, a fusion between the Soto and Rinzai schools initiated by Daiun Harada Roshi in the early twentieth century, was established in France at the "Zendo of the Three Rivers" (Zendo des Trois Rivières). More discreet, but also existing in the French Buddhist landscape, are two lineages of the master Li Chi (died 866): the Zen Kwan Um (Corean Lin Chi school in Paris), and the International Buddhist Progress Society (Chinese Lin Chi, also in Paris. Tibetan traditions range among the most visible Buddhist groups in France and Belgium: the Kagyupa traditions, established by the sixteenth Karmapa (Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, 1924 - 1981) in the early 1970s, and more significantly by Kalou Rinpoche, are dominant in France due to effective attempts to spread and settle. Other Tibetan schools like the Nyingmapa, the Sakyapa, and the Gelugpa (the school of Buddhism of the Dalai Lama), though installed in their host countries, have a more discreet presence. All in all, the traditions of the Mahayana have been mostly directed to a convert audience, and those of the Theravada to an "ethnic" audience – except for a handful of vipassana meditation groups, Theravada-oriented.

Challenges

Apart from previously mentioned aspects (cultural adaptation, social integration and political adjustment), Buddhism in France and Belgium faces three different challenging issues. The first is the success of the transplantation process of building temples: these are vital elements for the transmission and continuity of Buddhist institutions. The relocation of a Theravada wat or vihara, a Zen dojo or a Tibetan gompa in countries much more accustomed to the architecture of churches and monasteries was a challenge for Buddhist traditions. Most of the places where Buddhism is practiced are small, domestic ones. The majority of meditation centers are located in the private residences of their founders or followers. Only a few of the hundreds of Buddhist places of worship are temples constructed with respect to the architectural norms of monasticism. The economic capacity of the Buddhist milieu to purchase terrains for establishing large temples remains limited. But thanks to the financial support of devotees, all the Buddhist traditions established in France have at least one major temple or monastery. Tibetan traditions are represented by the highest number of large monasteries, due to the number of wealthy donors among their converts. Curiously, most of these large temples have been built in rural areas (with respect to the norms of reclusion for those who have adopted full-time ascetic practices), but have easily merged with the natural and cultural landscapes of the French and Belgian countryside. In the south-west region of France, where the largest and most traditionally decorated Tibetan monasteries are concentrated, neighboring municipalities have launched projects of "patrimonialization" of these temples, transforming them into tourist sites like other natural or architectural examples of the region. The temples nevertheless remain religious places, and while Asian and convert Buddhists can both practice at home, they attend these sites for collective cultic practices and training under the supervision of a monk.

Less than two centuries after having been discovered, one century after having started to be admired, and half a century of settlement, Buddhism has, in the three last decades, embarked on a process of acclimatization and has gradually become a recognized component of the cultural and religious landscapes of France and Belgium. It has eventually become the fourth or fifth religion of France according to demographic figures.

Yet Buddhism is not seen like other "foreign" religions, especially Islam, as regards its ability to acclimatize in Europe, France and Belgium. Islam, despite earlier direct contacts and unbroken exchanges with Western Europe since the Middle Ages, is still considered as an alien, exported, and potentially threatening religion. Buddhism, however, is believed to exemplify a peaceful and respectable imported spirituality, with a more well-regarded contribution to society. Islam and Buddhism are above all ideological representations that are located at the very opposite poles of European Orientalism (i.e. Western imagination of the East, or of the Orient). On the one hand there was a belief that the Orient was a geographic neighbor to Christian Europe, located in a Near or Middle-East (*Proche ou "Moyen" Orient*) that epitomizes the image of a radical cultural Otherness, unable to become accustomed to Western secular modernity. On the other hand there is the belief that the Orient has always been a geographically distant cultural outsider, but originates from the "Far East" (*Extrême-Orient*) countries that have been constructed as "mystic" or "sacred" places in the imagination of a reversely secular West.

In the "moral" geography of Europe, the more distant Buddhism was geographically, the closer it was in the realm of ideas, and Buddhism is perceived as "Modernity-friendly", whether it straightforwardly personifies it (Buddhism *is* modern), and whether it more indirectly "fits" modern societies like France and Belgium (Buddhism *can become* modern). This is one of the reasons why, excluding economic considerations, it is easier to build a Zen dojo, a Theravada vihara or a Tibetan gompa than a mosque in France, where malevolent acts against Muslim cultic sites have multiplied in the last three decades, whereas not one incident against a Buddhist place of worship has been recorded in the same period.

Islam is considered as "foreign" (it epitomizes "Otherness" in a pejorative meaning) and a "religion" in the French cultural and architectural landscape. As for Buddhism, it is seen as an "exotic" (Otherness in positive meaning) "spirituality", and therefore, contrary to Islam,

Hence, both are missionary traditions recruiting adherents in the local population. Whilst conversions to Islam are considered as a social and political problem, conversions to Buddhism, since they are not rationalized as such, are considered as "personal" quest and spiritual achievement. Published narratives of conversions to Buddhism as well as sociological inquiries all converge on this point, and Buddhism – although obviously religious in practice – is therefore not considered as a rival to Christianity, albeit the majority of French Buddhists (i.e. converts) are engaged in a process of apostasy of their Christian identity.

Therefore the adaptive strategies of Buddhist organizations and movements in France are complex, since they rest on a paradoxical alignment of religious and non-religious norms. Indeed, Asian and Western Buddhists reject the very notion of "religion" for their beliefs and practices, and favor more fashionable items like "wisdom", "ethics" or "spirituality". In so doing, they locate Buddhism in the category of new individually-oriented spiritual choices. Buddhist organizations, however, pursue rather different plans and aim at aligning with the government policies towards religions. France has been a secular country since 1905, and the State is not concerned with religious issues except when they concern national security. According to the principle of *laïcité* only historical religions are under consideration by State policies. Buddhist organizations have been looking for institutionalization processes and the recognition of their traditions as an official "religion" according to the national laws of each country. In France, Buddhist organizations have obtained two seats for Buddhist representatives in governmental administrations regarding the funding of health insurance and old age pension for religious personnel (the CAMAC and the CAMAVIC). In the last decade, ten Buddhist monasteries, all of them Tibetan, have succeeded in being labeled as "religion's congregations". But the more important recognition of Buddhism relies upon institutionalization processes and the adoption of legal structural frameworks of its host countries. Consequently, a French Buddhist Union (UBF) - Union Bouddhiste de France) -was founded in 1986. Most of monastic traditions are recognized by the UBF, but other important groups are still vetoed, especially the SGI. In Belgium, the situation is somewhat different. In the course of the attempts to press for official recognition of Buddhism as a "religion" in the country, Buddhist organizations had to demonstrate the tradition's value to society. The Belgian Ministry of Justice asserted that Buddhist assistance in providing meaning and direction to the life of spiritual seekers unsatisfied by their native religious tradition, is *per se* a substantial and adequate contribution to its social surroundings, as well as the altruistic engagement in welfare affairs it brings about among its followers. It is true that most of the converts, practitioners and sympathizers, French and Belgian, join Buddhism for the reason that Christianity (and to some extent, Judaism) is deemed to be old-fashioned and less adapted to modernity.

In Belgium too, a Belgian Buddhist Union (UBB) - Union Bouddhiste Belge - was established in 1997 as a response to the foundation of a national commission on sects. It embraces some of the major Buddhist groups established in the country – mainly Zen, Tibetan and Theravada traditions – and meaningfully, Buddhist groups equally located in Wallonia (a French-speaking region) and in Flanders (a Dutch-speaking region) while Belgium is, year after year, more threatened by linguistic and cultural secessionism. The legal and administrative regime of religion differs sensibly from France because it offers different possibilities of official recognition of Buddhism as a common religion, a way to facilitate its social and cultural integration. In 2006, the UBB pressed for the recognition of Buddhism as a "Belgian" religion. In 2007, the Ministry of Justice responded positively to the demand. In 2010, although the demand was still under consideration, the leaders of Buddhism in Belgium were confident of the outcome.

In the case of France, it is not sure that the strategies of Buddhist groups need to proceed in the same direction. Indeed, secularism is a deeply accepted norm and acutely sensitive when it is violated. Buddhism is located in a more complex position. First, it is seen as a "modern" spirituality (or a spirituality responding in a modern way – individually, reasonably, rationally – to modern questions) somewhat secular. But the appeal of Buddhism precisely lies in the fact that it is surrounded by the exotic and fascinating images of "eastern" spiritualities, so appealing to local citizens. One of the major challenges, as Dennis Gira suggested in 1997, is the issue of acculturation of Buddhism: to what extent and under what conditions will French Buddhists be able to cope with and reinvent the Asian heritage of their newly adopted traditions? And Raphael Liogier in 1998 underscored the need for Asian migrants to rearrange their religious ethics for life in new surroundings where they are compelled to forge a religiously-based "philosophy of integration". At the present moment, the adaptation strategies of Buddhism in France and Belgium are still torn between two paradoxical necessities: the need for an adaptive Westernization and a sustainable connection with its Asian roots.

The "westernization" of Buddhism, whether it is seen as adjustments of existing traditions or intentional attempts to reinvent them, supposes that French and Belgian Buddhist traditions are expected to rise and develop. The changes in Buddhist tradition that are more salient involve sociological adaptations. For instance, there is the *laicization* of practice (lay people practicing asceticism previously limited to monastic elites) and the "psychologization" of religious ideas (so they correspond to the understanding of religion in the framework of academic psychology, as is often the case in Western Europe).

In such a context, the training of religious masters recruited in the local populations is both a requisite for the resettlement of Buddhism abroad (a guarantee for its institutional reorganization) and a *locus* of experiment for the transculturation of Buddhist systems of beliefs and practices. In the Zen schools, French-born *roshi* are more numerous each year. Much higher is the number of French lamas in the Tibetan traditions – such as Matthieu Ricard, but also many new masters in the Tibetan traditions - since they have established large monasteries for monastic training, including the three years' retreat. In contrast with the United States, they have not advocated radical changes in the models of monastic authority, which remains strongly attached to the Asian models. If Buddhism has been influenced by cultural features and sociological tendencies in France and Belgium, for instance, individualism, it has been influential in maintaining the (collective) institutional structures of monasticism, albeit somewhat reshaped in a French style.

The success of a long-lasting rooting of Buddhism in France and Belgium is not only dependant on diffusion strategies (missions), transplantation processes (building temples), adaptations (adjustment to ideological and legal frameworks in the host country), but also on generational transmission within families. The linguistic, cultural and religious transmission in Asian domestic areas is challenged by the concurrence of lay knowledge and French language acquired in school and university. But the cultural continuity of Asian traditions for "ethnic" Buddhists is assumed by monastic organizations. If religious beliefs, values and ideas were of primary importance for the first generation of boat-people and exiles, this was because of the harsh conditions of their uprooting. Temples did (and still do) play a key role of a "community house". This is especially the case for the interconfessional pagoda of the Bois de Vincennes where national festivities of the countries of origin, national heroes, calendar celebrations (Vesak) and ancestors' rituals are performed, alongside more ethnic activities such as language courses, community meetings, and marriages. In 2009, religious relics were offered by Thailand to the pagoda, and the latter gained a wider reputation and is visited today as a place of pilgrimage (as is also the case with the Vietnamese Lin Sonh Temple in France). Buddhist ethnic temples serve both religious and profane purposes, but all directed towards the community itself, which is less the case for groups of converts. More problematic is the transmission within families of French or Belgian Buddhists, where children of converts do not systematically adopt (and perhaps even reject) the beliefs and belonging of their parents.

On the whole, Buddhism has succeeded in rooting and adapting in France and Belgium despite the significant cultural difference of Asian countries. The social and political conditions, as well as cultural settings and Western European imagination of Asian societies and religions participated in a reshaping of Buddhist traditions. But the shift from a Buddhism in France and in Belgium to a "French" or "Belgian Buddhism" is still a risky and precipitous conclusion for scholars. At least is it possible to suggest that, more than half a century after being established on the soils of the two above-mentioned countries, the roots seem to have become deep enough so that the first fruits have already been collected.

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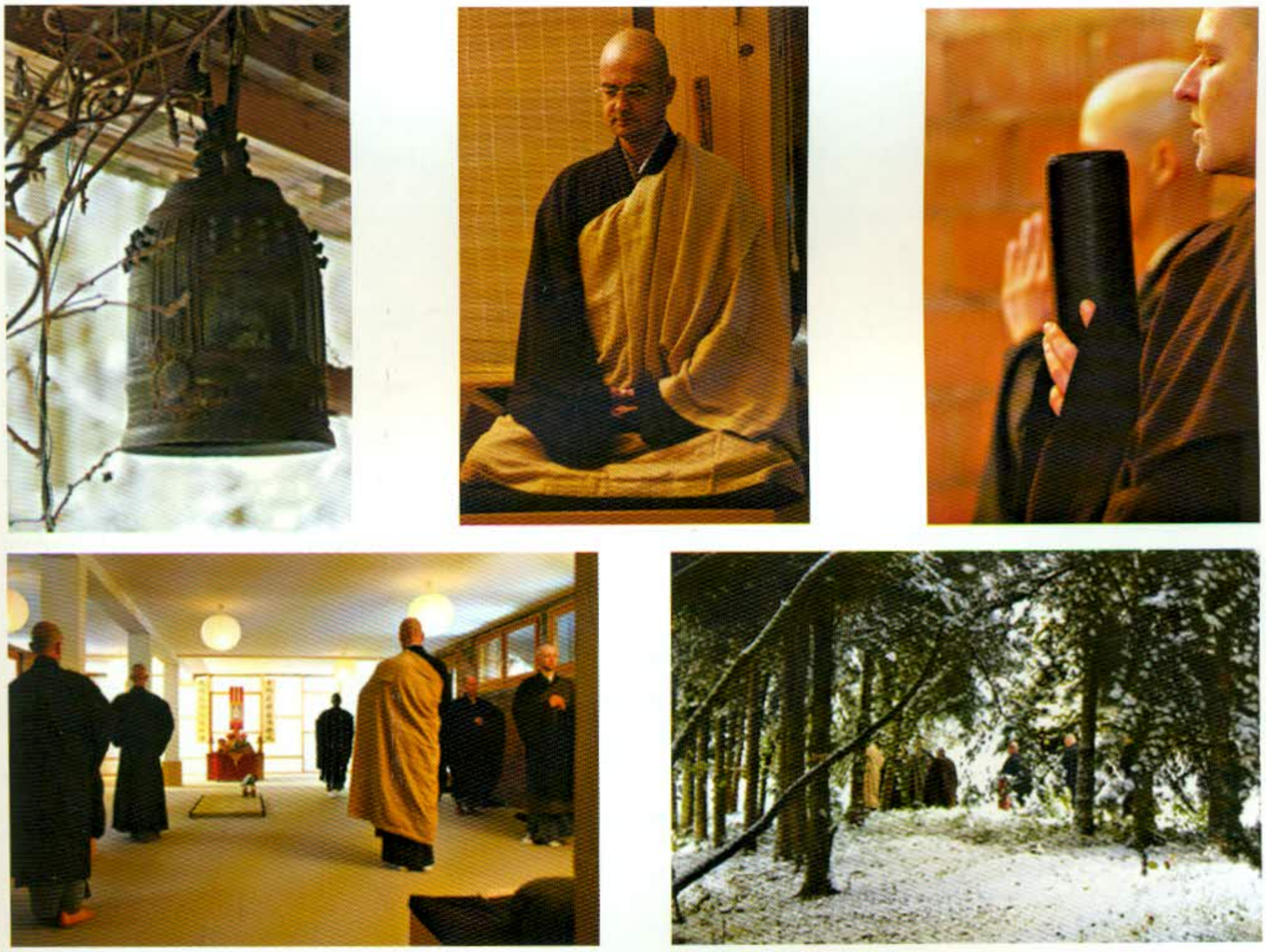
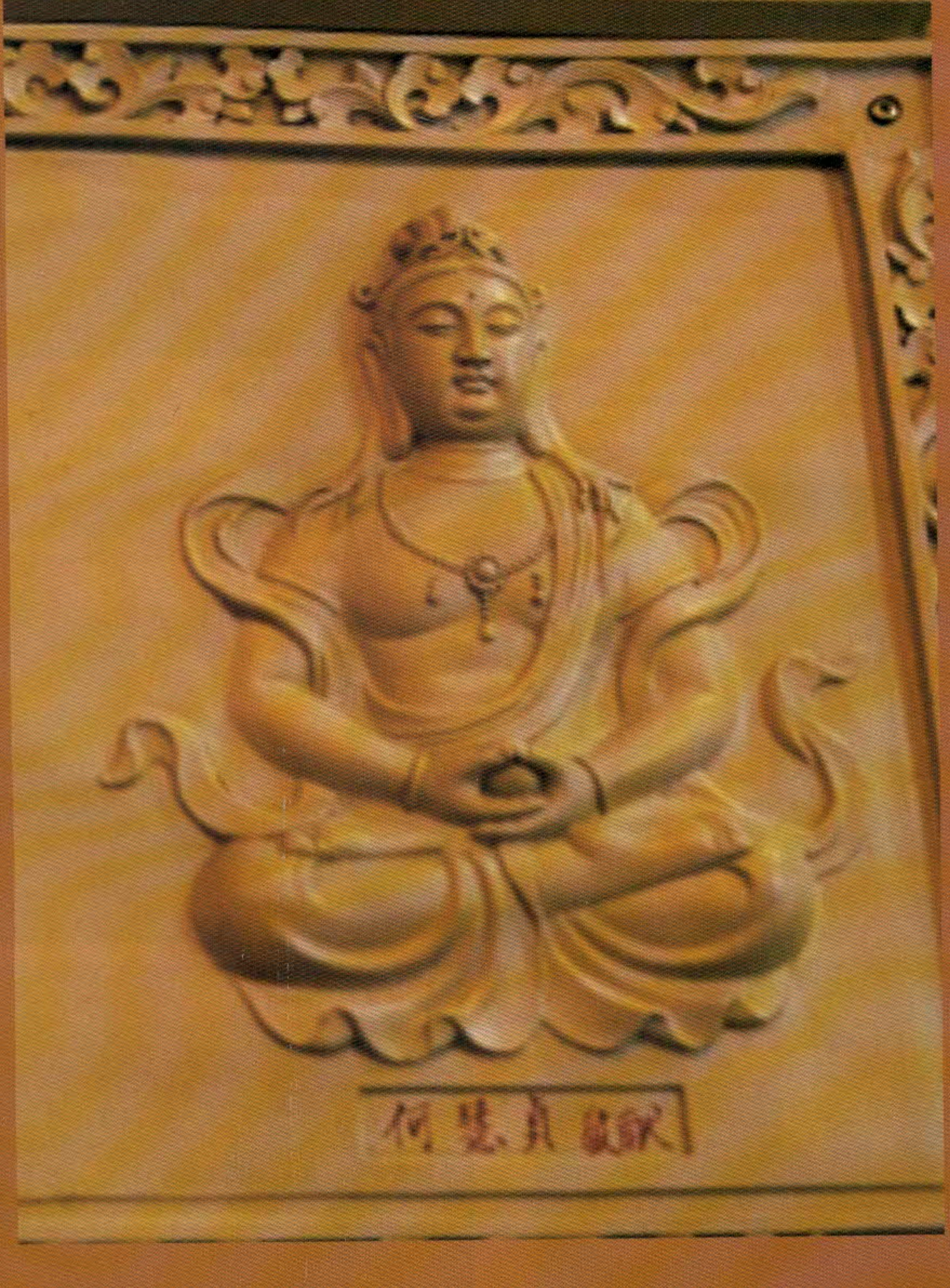


Zen practices at the Ho Zen Dojo - France



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Buddhism in the Netherlands

A Brief Resume and a Call for Further Research

Henk Blezer

Introduction

On May 26, 2009, several Dutch national newspapers sounded the alarm: the Dutch are turning to Buddhism on a massive scale. Some now even reckon Buddhism to be the third largest religion in the Netherlands.[1] Rather predictably, a little later that year and continuing in subsequent years, sceptical reports followed suit, which not only (and not for the first time) questioned the reliability of the estimated numbers of Dutch Buddhists, but also voiced serious concerns about the general health and strength of their newly-arisen national institutions.[2] This is eloquent testimony to the fact that there are many things we still do not know and that more research is needed. This insight also sets the parameters for this essay on Buddhism in the Netherlands. We do not even know who these Dutch Buddhists are or who counts as a Dutch Buddhist (which is a question one would obviously need to address before starting to count), or what is their 'seat' in Dutch society? What does Buddhism mean to them? How did Buddhism end up in the Low Countries in the first place? The Dalai Lama openly speculates on the possibility of Tulip Buddhism. Will Dutch varieties of Buddhism eventually emerge and what will they look like?

What obviously underlies media attention is the fact that, during roughly the last decade, following Dutch Hindus and Muslims, Buddhists also entered their bid for a piece of the cake of *verzuiling* (confessional compartmentalization of society and its financial benefits) with varying degrees of success. In 2001, the Dutch Buddhist Broadcast (BOS) first went on air. It secured its licence, as by legal requirement,[3] based on representation of a religious mainstream, i.e. Buddhism. As we shall see, these first institutional interests of Buddhist lobbyists sparked most of the available estimates of the number of "Buddhists" in the Netherlands, or at least of those who, for all practical purposes, are considered equivalent (in view of matters of supply and demand in marketing and programming). Earlier, the Netherlands witnessed the transformation of a small-scale Buddhist quarterly into a commercial glossy and the founding of a Dutch-language publishing house. In 2009, a government official for Buddhist affairs was appointed, and plans for an academic training programme for Buddhist caregivers are in the offing. Indeed, these are interesting, if not exciting times, for at least some Dutch Buddhists (but I readily concede that there may also be many devout Buddhists who are not much concerned with these political issues or may not even have heard about them).

Historically, the study of the migration of Buddhist culture mostly focuses on the role of powerful elites. For the study of late-modern Dutch varieties of Buddhism and its starkly different cultural dynamics, the angle of popular culture and its underlying commercial momentum promise to be revealing. The recent surge of a broad interest in Buddhism in modern Dutch popular religious culture offers a unique opportunity for further study. It challenges old assumptions that are still based on non-modern contexts and thus sheds new light on the cultural dynamics of the contemporary spread of global varieties of Buddhism. It particularly allows us to abandon the outdated, somewhat essentialist explanatory model of the transplantation of Buddhism and to discern the manner in which new Buddhism is shaped and reinvented from late-modern Dutch religious cultural matrixes. Alas, unlike abroad, hardly any systematic research has been done on the rise of Buddhism in the Netherlands. However, at this particular juncture of unprecedented institutionalisation of Buddhism in the Netherlands, it would seem a choice moment for fundamental research that could inform current policy decisions.

Desiderata

Since reliable and independent demographics of Dutch Buddhism are still lacking, one would need to start from scratch and supply them by designing a survey. As said, the best and most detailed statistics we presently have were initiated by the DOS to chart their constituency in society. In general, government statistics (CPB, CBS, & WRR, see bibliography), Buddhists have mostly stayed below the radar: the numbers of Buddhists were not considered significant enough to allow computation.[4] We need to pay attention to processes of institutionalization of Buddhism in the Netherlands as well, and particularly to its increasing involvement in government policies and in business ventures.[5] A major desideratum, moreover, is a better qualitative understanding of the cultural dynamics of the reception of Buddhism in the Netherlands - of course in a wider international context of global Buddhism. As indicated, special attention is due to the recent surge in popular interest, as it is mediated and commoditized by commercial popular culture. As to content analysis, my reasoned working assumption is that newly "converted" Dutch Buddhists will need to be considered in the light of the wider and much older phenomenon of "Western" counter culture (cf. Roszak, 1995), particularly in its orientalist varieties.

Analytical Categories for the Study of Global Buddhism

Before we proceed, we have to try to agree on some analytical terms. I shall therefore briefly review the main dichotomies and analytical categories that one presently finds employed in scholarly literature (cf. Baumann, 2001), some of which will also provisionally be engaged in this essay. Please note that these are not meant as descriptive categories and that they also do not imply historical entities, or map onto sectarian boundaries. In this article they merely serve as heuristic devices.

Asian and Non-Asian Buddhism. There is a basic dichotomy employed in the study of Buddhism, into so-called regional "Asian" varieties of Buddhism and Buddhism that more recently spread "outside Asia". It goes without saying that there is a degree of arbitrariness to this distinction: Buddhism is also not native to most Asian regions, outside India and Nepal, and it also entered Asian regions at different times. The dichotomy of "Asian" and "non-Asian" therefore is not tenable in an absolute way. Buddhism in the former Soviet Union may be a case in point. Compare, for instance, long established Buddhism in its Asian regions, such as in Outer Mongolia, Buryatia, etc. - mostly of the Tibetan variety - with the later, but still old, Buddhist monastic establishment in St Petersburg (started 1909). Many other exceptions exist. India and Nepal, once the cradle of Buddhism at some points in history, as again now, have become recipients of Buddhism as well, notably of Tibetan varieties. (See also *Global Buddhism* below.)

Traditionalist and Modernist Buddhism are present both within and outside Asia.[6] Traditionalist varieties generally were dominant in Asia (but much has changed, many new Buddhist movements arose in Japan and South-east Asia), while modernist ones dominate elsewhere. Modernist movements in Asia often were elite movements, directly or indirectly shaped by exposure to the Christian cultures of colonizers. Better knowledge of modernization movements in Asia may be revealing, not only for appreciating the developmental phase(s) of Buddhism that spread from Asia, but also for understanding comparable dynamics in other contexts of modernity. Some add an older "phase" of canonical Buddhism (Baumann, 2001). Evidently, the distinction between "canonical" and "traditionalist" Buddhism is problematic for other than Theravada traditions, but also for other reasons. The exceedingly long period of traditionalist Buddhism, lasting from Asoka (third century CE) till modernization, nearly two millennia, may be somewhat large to define anything useful. The assumption that for about two thousand years nothing noteworthy happened in Buddhist South and South-east Asia, until the advent of modernity, sooner or later will have to be addressed as a form of cultural chauvinism.

Ethnic and Convert Buddhism. "Ethnic" Buddhism entered with migrants and "convert" Buddhism is that of local converts. The latter, politically even more *risqué*, are sometimes also called "white" Buddhists (Fields, 1981), but more commonly, "Western Buddhist converts". Together with "regional" forms, ethnic and convert Buddhism cover the widest spectrum. In that spectrum, convert Buddhism often shows the most atypical varieties. It usually addresses modernist rather than traditionalist issues. Ethnic Buddhism often passes on to following generations. If it was not already modernist in its region of origin, then it may modernize somewhere down the line, or get involved in postmodern life-styles. Convert Buddhists less frequently transmit Buddhism to their children. Converts typically are well-educated, Caucasian, baby boomers, more often than not female. Nattier calls convert Buddhism "elite", and besides ethnic Buddhism also distinguishes "evangelical" Buddhism, which covers the important but somewhat atypical Soka Gakkai International, which exhibits an exceptionally strong missionary drive. To avoid repeated reference to the problematic term convert we will henceforth speak about "New Dutch Buddhists" instead.

Global Buddhism. Modernist varieties of Buddhism that spread from Asia or originated outside Asia tend toward global agendas. Baumann considers this a fourth category and later phase, next to canonical (older), traditionalist and modernist Buddhism. A complicated fabric emerges, in which new forms of Buddhism outside Asia consciously seek to emancipate themselves from traditional regional aspects, or even were construed along modernist lines from the very start. But we also see varieties of Buddhism emerge that originally were highly localized but suddenly adopt globalist agendas, and travel far and wide, not really appealing to those late-moderns who feel attracted to re-traditionalized forms of Buddhism; some would use the label "post-modern".

Secular Buddhism. Within Global Buddhism, entirely non-religious off-shoots also have sprouted; some are very successful, commercially.[7] Within Global Buddhism, secularized non-Buddhist off-shoots develop, such as Chögyam Trungpa's Shambhala training or Jon Kabat Zinn's system of mindfulness-based stress reduction. Baumann (2001) classifies those adaptations as post-modern rather than modern (it is not entirely clear why).

New Vehicle. Occasionally, yet another category is mentioned, *Navayana*, Pali or Sanskrit for "new vehicle". It is formed in analogy to traditional Buddhist classifications that are much involved with inner Buddhist sectarian divisions, such as the derogatory term "inferior or small vehicle", *Hiniyana* (a term that is both historically and politically incorrect, presently *de facto* equivalent with Theravada, so-called southern Buddhism, the only surviving offshoot of older Buddhism), the "great vehicle", Mahayana (some use the terms southern and northern to capture that distinction in later periods) and "diamond vehicle", *Vajrayana*. We find the term *Navayana*, employed in the context of the engaged Ambedkar movement in India, but also by proponents of modernist varieties of Buddhism and academics (such as Boeree and Velde). Because of proximity to ideological distinctions and its occasional employment on that level, *Navayana* may not be a very useful analytical category (to be used on the same level of analysis as are the above), but it no doubt has great explanatory value for work from different angles.

Some Reflections on the Methodology and the Theoretical Framework

The typological complexity outlined above already indicates that the study of Buddhism cannot be theoretically and methodologically involved in the same way for each case study. In the Netherlands, our main analytical focus is on somewhat atypical varieties of New "Western" Buddhism, more often than not (post) modernist in outlook and global in orientation. The study of Buddhism among migrants and their descendants in the Netherlands is, indeed, theoretically and methodologically very differently involved and is presently also seriously hampered by a lack of reliable data. This major but neglected aspect of Dutch Buddhism, therefore, is better left for a separate study. Much is clear, however: so-called Dutch migrant Buddhists are perhaps even more under-studied and also remarkably under-represented in the recent institutionalization of Dutch Buddhism in the Netherlands. Many of these developments tend to follow the exclusive interests and agendas of so-called New Dutch Buddhists.

For most of the temporal and regional varieties, scholars have worked from the assumption that Buddhism is a kind of graft or transplant that migrates and adjusts to different cultural settings. But this model does not work well for the problematic of modernist and not at all for new "Western" and Global Buddhism. Buddhist traditions for most of their history and in most Asian regions functioned in non-modern contexts, while New Western Buddhism presently develops in secularized late modern cultural environments, where the concept of religion is a vastly different category."New Buddhists", however different they may seem, still carry specific, relatively unique, and, from a wider perspective, also relatively homogeneous cultural baggage. In historically aware culture analysis, theoretically New Buddhism in many ways appears comparable to orientalist tendencies in New Age religious movements (Hanegraaff, 1996). Both partake in quite similar modernist culture critical countermovements and often are indebted to ideas from secularized Western esotericism. In short, conventional ways of visualizing the spread of Buddhism often fall short, both analytically and in explanatory power.

This brief anticipation on theoretical issues recommends a radical reframing of research efforts. We should no longer assume that we are looking at Buddhist "transplants" that are in the process of adapting to foreign culture. I rather recommend analyzing New Dutch Buddhism first and foremost from the intellectual history of Dutch (popular) religious counterculture, so not primarily from historical awareness of regional forms of Buddhism, which the orientalist mimicry so vividly invokes. NB: this is *not* a normative decision or value judgement in any way. The epistemic divide between non-modern regional Asian Buddhism and the secularized religious needs in a late modern world renders the old model of migration, grafting, and adaptation (unintentionally captured very well by the phrase *tulpenboeddhisme*) less suitable and recommends starting from new assumptions: that the new creation or reinvention of Buddhism is a "new religion" and that late modern Dutch counterculture reflects its spiritual interests in Buddhist forms (*polderboeddhisme*). But, needless to say, in this culture analysis, reference to regional Buddhism will nonetheless be necessary in order to reveal the contrast. In brief:

1 New Dutch Buddhism, mainly of the convert varieties, should basically be viewed as a Dutch cultural phenomenon.
2 As such, it pertains to so-called new religions that arise from a (late) modern counter-cultural fringe, characterized by internalization of religion and self-reflexivity.

3. New Dutch Buddhism engages the modernist issues or postmodern perspectives of its specific subcultures. Thus, ideologically, it often follows critical pacifist, green, left-wing, or emancipatory agendas. Obviously, these are mostly foreign to non-modern forms of Buddhism—even though some of those trends already entered Buddhism earlier, in its modernist varieties in Asia.[8]
4. The religious concerns of a modernist counter-cultural fringe are reflected in or projected onto Buddhist forms, appearing as a kind of cultural mimicry.[9]
5. Systematic references to xenotic Buddhist forms are mediated by commercial popular culture, through mass media.[10] Popular Buddhism thus necessarily partakes in sociological and economic dynamics of those media and their ever-widening currency.

The Main Topics Discussed in This Essay

1. Some thoughts toward a history of Buddhism in the Netherlands.
2. The wider non-Asian and particularly 'Western' reception history.
3. Culture Analysis: which Buddhists and Buddhism are we talking about? Further theoretical reflection on the rise of popular interest in Buddhism in the Netherlands and its cultural matrix.

Charting out this broad field, requires engaging a rich variety of expertise, mainly of a (social) historical, and culture philosophical nature, drawing from textual, visual and material culture. It moreover requires a thorough familiarity with the global history and the many shapes and forms of Buddhism, and access to regional Asian forms, including their literatures, wherever necessary

Some Thoughts Towards a History of Buddhism in The Netherlands

A comprehensive history of Buddhism in the Netherlands is still a challenge waiting to be taken on. Where to start, what data to select? Before I proceed with the main subject matter of this section, allow me to start, *pars pro toto* (representative of all the details we do not yet know about the early history of the spread of Buddhism to the Netherlands), with an admittedly quaint and curious detail, a somewhat personal diversion: a recent Buddhism-inspired pilgrimage to find putative relics of the Buddha in the low countries. Later, I will proceed in a more generalised manner, outlining the framework for a comprehensive history and leave any further details—whether quaint and curious or not—for a later, more in-depth study and, wherever possible, referring to the scarce extant publications on the topic.

Relics of the Buddha Found in Antwerpen (Belgium)?[11]

Namo tassa Josaphato Arahato SammÌsambuddhassa

Late in 2009, in a delightful historical quest with my good colleague Dan Martin in Jerusalem, we got wind of the possible presence of "bodhisattva" (i.e. St Josaphat) relics in St Andrieskerk in Antwerp. Shortly after, with a small band of scholars of Buddhism and India, we put together an impromptu pilgrimage to the present location of the relics in Antwerp, to the South of the Netherlands.

In hindsight, the timing may have been less than perfect: it poured with rain all day long and pictures show a sadly soaked group, looking very lost in Antwerp. To make things worse, the lay caretakers of the church appeared too busy to receive us. They were making preparations for the celebration of the names day of St Andreas,[12] the patron saint of the church. Here are the data that sparked our southward journey.

The Itinerary of the Relics of the "Bodhisvattva", "Josephat" (to Belgium)

1571 Doge Luigi Mocenigo of Venice donated the relics (bone and piece of vertebra) to King Sebastian of Portugal (Jacobs, 1896: xviii[13] and Lang, 1966:9)[14], through the Spanish Envoy Pedro Velasco.[15]

1580 Spain seized Portugal and Don Antonio, Pretender to the Portuguese crown, removed the relics (Jacobs, 1896).

1595 Don Antonio of Portugal was defeated by Alva and fled to Paris, where he passed away.[16]

1633 Relics arrived from Portugal with the Cistercians in St Salvator, Antwerp (*plaquette* at the relic shrine? I am not completely sure about the date).

1672 August 7: the holy remains of St Josaphat were carried t zo the cloister of St Salvator[17] in a grand procession (Jacobs, 1896: xviii). Jacobs, 1896: xix, presumes that the relics in his age might still be in St Salvator, but they seem to have been removed, about a century before

1796 December 19: sometime after the French revolution, during the French occupation, the monastics of St Salvator were led out of the Abbey, with drums beating (Cruys & Cheron, 2003:7).[18]

1797 June 16: the Abbey and possessions were sold (ibid.).[19]

Fearing that the "paper" trail might stop here, I was very pleased to find an online article by Wilfried Nijs and Rudy Janssens in a publication of a local history circle in Holsbeek,[20] which indicated that all thirty-six relics at around that point in time had been relocated to the St Andrieskerk (see particularly their section on "Relieken").

The present silver reliquary was produced by JBA. Verschuylen, around 1846 (quite a stunning piece of craftsmanship in fact).[21] The angels adorning it were made by others (Lodewijk Corijn and brothers de Cuyper); (see pictures). The shrine is paraded yearly in the procession of "*de parochie van miserie*".[22]

As outlined above, the earliest traces of the relics so far indicate that they were already around in Venice, some time before 1571 CE. (Time wise, that would effectively rule out any confusion with Josaphat of Polotsk 1595-1623.)[23]

The Itinerary of the Legends

The bulk of the literature on the many versions of the legend may be intimidating, and much has already been accomplished in previous scholarly publication.[24] It would be interesting to track those relics back in time and fill in some of the gaps. There is more to be said about the history of the relics than this excursion allows.[25]

However, the fact that the trail leads us to Venice in the sixteenth century CE does not bode well in this regard. Venice was a node in major trade networks and we are looking at the aftermath of a rich history and economy in mediaeval Europe of both trade and pilgrimage relating to relics—or what had to pass for relics anyway. I am therefore not overly confident that we will find any useful antecedent trails. DNA testing of the relics would of course be very interesting; but then, permission and funding would become major issues.

One could of course easily formulate doubts and caveats. Joseph—for quite obvious reasons—is a rather frequent name in Christian societies. How significant are proclaimed relics? I presume that if we try to fit all the teeth and other relics ever presumed to be of the Buddha into a human figure, we would probably end up with an interspecies creature that would do well in the next sequel of the film *Alien*. Trying to fit replicas of all the pieces of the Holy Cross together one could probably likewise build a small church. For a brief and fairly recent overview of the meanderings of the Josaphat legends see Philip Almond's eminently readable survey,[26] particularly useful for those who shy away from older and detailed comparative studies, such as by Ernst Kuhn (1897).

The long itinerary of the legend to Europe presumably starts from Buddhist India and possibly proceeds through eclectic Manichaean hands, such as attested by documents from Turfan in Central Asia; but in any case the legends seem to have reached our earliest Christian versions, probably in the form of a Georgian text (see work by Lang, 1966), via earlier Arabic versions; and eventually continued to fan out into many European languages via early Greek and further via Latin translation. Other itineraries exist for other regions. To the best of my knowledge, in the Dutch language, Philip van Utenbroeke was the first to includea a substantial version of the legend in his sequel to Jacob van Maerlant's *Spieghel Historiael*, around 1300.[27] The itinerary, incidentally, may also enlighten us on the possible transformation of the name Bodhisattva to Josaphat: e.g.: *Bodhisattva* (India) > *Bodisav* (Turkish) > *Budhasaf* (Arabic) > *Yudasaf* (Arabic, apparently only one diacritical dot different) > *Iodasaf* (Georgian) > *Ioasaph* (Greek) > *Josaphat* (Latin).

Almond's 1987 article is very enlightening for appreciating how Josaphat and Bodhisattva/Buddha possibly relate. Almond, like Wilfred Cantwell Smith, takes care first to point out the immense popularity of these legends and the attendant narratives in Europe, starting around the eleventh century CE. Some of the attending stories and fables equally go back to Indian origins, and some also survived independently from the Josaphat legends. The stunning amount of extant manuscripts, translations, borrowings, and references amply underline their impact. The Josaphat legends were greatly loved and thus seem to have had a profound impact in Christian "Europe", not only by their apparently enchanting fables and stories, but certainly also *vis-à-vis* the main theme: appreciation of asceticism. They indirectly or directly influenced figures such as Shakespeare and Tolstoy.

One cannot help but wonder how this matrix of Buddhist-derived and otherwise accrued narratives may have facilitated later reception(s) of Buddhism in (Christian) Europe, which indeed is the question that originally incited Almond to embark on his journey. The prospect of comparative study of this huge, multi-lingual, literary complex is truly daunting, but, in all fairness, considering the apparent appeal and wide spread of the legends, its impact may be both considerable and considerably understudied. If not the legends and stories themselves, their history may not only be fascinating but also revealing.[28]

While Buddhism started in north-eastern India and Nepal around the middle of the first millennium BCE, it has a long history of migration in Asian regions and beyond. In fact, Buddhism may be the only easily recognizable cultural marker for Asia (which otherwise of course must remain a problematic entity). In the path of that history, many regional and local forms have developed. In recent centuries global forms arose as well. Many of those have local origins; some also are the result of conscious efforts of modernization and globalization.

So far, most academic effort went into understanding the establishment of Buddhism in remote regions and non-modern periods—often more than a millennium ago—and thus often was based on scant surviving records.[29] The initial establishment of Buddhism (or any "world religion") in its various contexts was commonly facilitated by the political interests and the prestige of ruling elites, while its long-term survival required a broader and stable material basis. The crucial turning point, where Buddhism migrates from elite to popular cultural awareness and finds a broad economical basis, has been notoriously hard to pin down, based on the scant surviving historical data. Less, but still considerable effort, has been spent on studying Buddhism outside Asia and on modernization movements within Asia.[30] Now, looking at the brighter side of things, the contemporary development of Buddhism outside Asia and its ample records provide a unique opportunity to study *in situ* the various factors that leaven the growth of Buddhism in new environments.[31]

We should not expect to find too many similarities across large divides of time and culture. The great varieties of surviving forms of Buddhism that are the result of its migration throughout Asia help to underline this point. Development in modernist secularized religious contexts, or exposure to late modern understandings of spirituality and self, dictate (radically) different culture dynamics.

The Dutch have been exposed to Buddhism for about as long as they have pursued mercantile and colonial interests in Asia. A stray story about Buddhism arrived as early as the Middle Ages.[32] Brief references reached Europe even earlier BCE via Greek culture. In the nineteenth century, we find the first notable active interest, mainly elite (intellectual) pursuits, which also involved early international translation and publication;[33] more often than not, these reflect local religious debates.[34]

The middle of the twentieth century saw the first attempts at organizing Dutch Buddhism.[35] The first emergence of Buddhism in the popular culture of the 1960s and 70s also ushers in a markedly more practical contemplative involvement with Buddhism. It is only since the 1990s, however, that Buddhism gained the momentum of a significant popular religious movement, also outside Buddhist communities, often styled *sangha*. In the present decade, organized Dutch Buddhists seem to have embarked on yet a new phase. At the hands of a few individuals, who combine vision and *savoir faire*, Buddhism is establishing its *zuil*, its "pillar", in Dutch society and, since the late 70s, it continues to institutionalize, also beyond the level of individual sanghas, with a strong efflorescence starting around the turn of the millennium. Brief discussions of the history of Buddhism and its main organizations in the Netherlands and its main institutions appears in den Boer (van Gemert, 1990) and (2007), and Janssen, (1994). The most comprehensive coverage of Buddhism to date, including data on its several communities and demographics, is still the old edited volume and survey by Victor van Gemert (1990, plus a 1993 update). Specifically Christian (anarchist) receptions, rejections and perceptions of Buddhism, from 1840 until 1940, are well-covered in a more recent, detailed and well-researched study by Poorthuis & Salemink (2009). However, their coverage after 1940 is somewhat sketchy and partial. It would not make much sense to resume dated research or otherwise incomplete findings without adding the latest on the present situation. This task still awaits sociological and demographic surveys and their proper interpretation.[36] Until further research materialises, I therefore choose to focus on qualitative aspects, which to my understanding are introductory to the future study of Buddhism in the Netherlands.

It should be clear, in any case, that the emergence of Dutch Buddhism is indeed vastly understudied, certainly in comparison to the state of affairs in the US, UK, Germany or France.[37] Presently, we do not even know how many "Buddhists" there are. In the absence of reliable demographics and reliable sociological studies, the estimates vary widely, from (tens of) thousands to 1.75 million or more.[38] They vary too widely to serve as a basis for government policies.[39] Even the basic definition of who counts as a Buddhist outside ethnic and traditional regional contexts still awaits an answer. A more comprehensive history of Dutch Buddhism, therefore, still remains to be achieved. Such a project would naturally involve a history from the earliest contacts,[40] but also detailed accounts of the establishment of all the various relevant traditions and schools that reached outside Asia in their full breadth of extant sectarian divisions,[41] including various modernized[42] and non-sectarian approaches. That daunting scope alone already renders it almost impossible to be comprehensive, especially since reference to Asian regional origins and contemporary backgrounds is also needed. I should therefore like to suggest two priorities, for a first historical inquiry into Dutch Buddhism as we know it now.

"The West": The Issue of Mediation of Popular Culture and its Economy

In 2001, the Dutch Buddhist Broadcast (BOS)[43] first came on air. In many ways, this was a watershed event, both for the popularization of Buddhism in the Netherlands and its further organization and commoditization. Earlier we witnessed the transformation of a small-scale Buddhist quarterly into a commercial glossy (1995) now called *Vorm & Leegte* ("Form & Emptiness"),[44] soon followed by the founding of a Dutch Buddhist publishing house, Asoka, that now publishes the newest incarnation of that magazine.[45] These initiatives mark a major shift in economical basis and a sharp increase in numbers of "professional Buddhists". In 2009, the first government official for Buddhist affairs in the Netherlands was appointed[46] and plans for a Buddhist school are in the offing[47], likewise an academic training programme for Buddhist caregivers at the Free University of Amsterdam.[48]

Lately, when the Dutch social political concept *verzuiling*[49] almost seemed *passé* in the Netherlands, Dutch Buddhists also started organizing themselves and laying belated claims to their compartment of society, as Dutch Hindu and Muslim organizations successfully did before. Formal recognition as a religious pillar comes with certain rights and duties, amongst which are entitlements to those government subsidies earmarked for religious groups. Concerning the processes of the institutionalization of Buddhism, the economic impetus of these initiatives, particularly of the foundation and funding of the BOS, may even outweigh their public relations impact—which by itself already was very significant.

Unlike Christian or Muslim organizations, newly converted Dutch Buddhists have no strong, locally established traditions of charity and more often than not lack structural financial support networks. This situation is quite unlike that of their Asian or even migrant Buddhist counterparts, who usually benefit from established practices of Buddhist generosity (dana), which, not surprisingly, is a major theme in traditional preaching for lay Buddhists. One could contrast the Dutch convert situation to that of their US brethren, who much depend on firmly established traditions of American philanthropy. Based on the Dutch *collectebusmentaliteit*[50] alone, even the individual Buddhist communities or sanghas have trouble getting by, as with the overarching national bodies that are even further removed from donating members. Government recognition and subsidies make all the difference to the political and financial clout of higher level organizational structures, which previously were largely dependent on charity and volunteer-labour. For more substantial investments, Buddhists therefore typically have to turn to government subsidies.

In the last decade a few assertive and entrepreneurial senior Dutch Buddhists, in their adamantine wisdom, decided to lay claim to their Buddhist compartment of society and to the concomitant government budgets. But do we know who these Dutch Buddhists are who make up that compartment and what their concerns are? Who do representative structures, such as the *Boeddhistische Unie Nederland* (BUN) - Dutch Buddhist Union - or the *Boeddhistische Omroep Stichting* (BOS) - Dutch Buddhist Broadcast - actually represent?

"The East": Spiritual Imperialism

The major traditions of Buddhism are all represented in the Netherlands, the main centres of gravity being Zen, Theravada and Tibetan Buddhism (in that approximate chronological order of dominance).[51] The most successful spreading forms of Buddhism in the Netherlands at present are the Tibetan varieties.[52] Regional headquarters, mostly in the Tibetan exile communities, have financially become increasingly dependent on foreign Buddhists and supporters. Occasionally, one can even observe fierce competition between individual Tibetan Buddhist sects and teachers for resources abroad, also in Asia (i.e. Taiwan). The global hype of Tibetan Buddhism thus proves vital to the survival of the frail, exiled Tibetan religious economy. Even though the global harvest of religious converts falls squarely within traditional Tibetan patron-priest (*mchod yon*) schemes, it presently unfolds on quite an unprecedented scale and in starkly different cultural settings. The economic needs and realities that underlie this benign form of "religious imperialism" may help explain the extraordinary momentum in the spread and growth of Tibetan varieties of Buddhism. Partly, this also seems to relate to predictable postcolonial reflexes of sympathy for the subaltern so deeply seated in Western counter-culture. Interest in Tibetan varieties of Buddhism and Bön (Tibetan Vajrayana) has always resonated to some degree with sympathy for the "Tibetan cause", and if not, many Tibetans are quick (and probably justified) to remind one of this. In any case, it is recommendable, by way of case study, to take Asian partners into the economic equation.

The Wider Non-Asian and Particularly "Western" Reception History

Even though our main focus now is on the *lacunae* in our knowledge of Dutch Buddhism, we cannot avoid its obvious international entanglements. A quick glance at the history of Buddhism in the Netherlands reveals that it is an inextricable part of a wider phenomenon of emergence of global varieties of Buddhism. This clearly also reflects on matters of content. Thus, many traditions, teachers, and publications or translations, were first introduced via other European nations or languages. It is also evident on organizational levels. For example, BUN was established in 1978 as a complement to the establishment of the European Buddhist Union (EBU) in 1975. Indeed, the main motive was to create a Dutch counterpart for the EBU, a *sine qua non* for Dutch EBU membership. BUN kept a low profile for most of its existence, and even hibernated for a while in the late Eighties. It received a major impulse during the compartmentalization and monetization of Buddhism. In its present phase of *verzuiling* of Buddhism, starting with the launch of the first successful structures for professional Buddhists (such as BOS), BUN has become a major player in the field of organized Buddhism in the Netherlands. In November 2008, BUN was in fact recognized by the Dutch government as the only official presenter for that poorly known entity called Dutch Buddhism or *Boeddhistisch Zendende Instantie* (BZI).[53] These recent developments have shifted gears in the process of the institutionalization of Dutch Buddhism.

The surge in popular interest in Buddhism in the Netherlands typically coincides with the entry of Buddhism into global awareness, largely through commercial popular culture, via various media. Before commercial mediation, Buddhism in the Netherlands largely remained a small and elitist affair. As a working hypothesis, one might posit that the traditional leverage and prestige of the ruling elite or state support in the establishment of so-called world religions in non-modern contexts in the postmodern world has shifted toward the leverage and impact of commercially involved (or driven) popular media in the rise of so-called new religions, such as New Buddhism in the West. Presently, the iconic value of Buddhism, especially of its colourful Tibetan varieties, is enormous—or should I say priceless?—but, needless to say, not all those "aroused" become Buddhists. The flipside of the coin is that popular Buddhism is also shaped by the same economic realities of commercial pop culture; for instance, by selectively promoting an abbreviated, anti-elitist, anti-intellectual Buddhism and by foregrounding those aspects that can be commoditized more easily.

Culture Analysis: Which Buddhists or Buddhisms are we Talking About?

Before developing this line of analysis further, we briefly need to dwell on matters of perceived content and note extant cognitive dissonances between 'convert' and so-called traditional Asian forms of Buddhism; confusion appears to be endemic:

Inner diversity. Considering the confounding inner diversity of Buddhism—Theravada, Tibetan Tantrism, Amidism, or the Japanese Nichiren shu, to mention but a few—Buddhism may better be compared to the breadth of Abrahamic religions than to that of any of its surviving offshoots, such as Christian or Islamic traditions. Even core religious practices vary widely: cultivating meditative absorption, performing elaborate ritual, evocation of the name of a saviour, repetition of the name of a text, or whatever. Buddhism covers, or has covered, most of Asia, and is no less diverse than are these Asian regions. Unlike the Holy Roman Church, there never has developed a clear, imposed "orthodoxy" - not beyond regional levels in any case.

Even though most academics are aware of that great variance and inner diversity, and occasionally may even find it difficult to agree upon universal characteristics or on an underlying system, they nonetheless study Buddhism as a religion or a religious system. Hardly anyone (academics included) hesitates to speak about Buddhism as if it were a well-defined and unproblematic entity. Some even take this a step further and refer to "mainstream Buddhism" (such as Eric Cheetham or the Japan Buddhist Federation, which announces itself using this term). In any case, for practical purposes, more substance of Buddhism is perhaps to be found on its periphery than at its centre. Therefore, approaching Buddhism from its fringes may often be more revealing than approaching it from some presumed orthodoxy or fictional mainstream.

Two conclusions are evident. First, Buddhism is best appreciated by a team of regional specialists. Second, attention is due to the more significant "fringes" that delineate Buddhist culture. Buddhism should not in a facile manner be reduced to a hypothetical mainstream, which more often than not, upon closer investigation, will reveal itself an artefact of the observer (it is "in the eye of the beholder") and is, if anything, indicative of our own history of studying Buddhism.

Historicism and the search for origins. This particular aspect by now has been studied to excess (see, amongst many others, the early work by Lopez,1998). Yet, for reasons of completeness, it still deserves a brief review here. The search for origins is mainly a text-critical and text-historical quest, which stands in a long tradition of secularization and deconstruction of religious dogma and religious narration of history. Such historicist projects, in this particular case indelibly tinged by their orientalist roots, are partly also driven by the need to come to terms with the complexity of Buddhism, and to simplify some of the extant variance. Early scholars of Buddhism confronted with the wide variability of their subject-matter, were hard-pressed for an acceptable definition of mainstream or core ideas of Buddhism within the confounding plethora of cultural forms. Entirely in keeping with nineteenth- and early twentieth-century academic milieus of liberal protestant theology, the buddhological academic community mainly chose a text-based historicising deconstruction of ethnic and cultural "Buddhisms" and for the reconstruction of textual "original Buddhism". For obvious reasons, text-critical and text-historical methods naturally recommended themselves for the task.

Text-based Buddhism thus quickly moved centre stage. Reduction of the extant textual complexity is attempted by reconstructing an *Ur*-text wherever possible; peeling off the earliest textually attestable doctrinal content from layers of later accretions and presumed corruptions, and by understanding its history of ideas in a historicist context. Early Buddhism was generally imagined to be like Theravada, but then a bit older and perhaps a bit less of it, without the presumably acquired colours of "folklore". We all know what that methodology leaves us when Buddhism is thus pursued to its ultimate "source".

The painstaking work of deconstruction of religious myth and doctrinal accretions is engaged on the tacit assumption that buddhology can pretty much survive by philology alone—at best accommodated in a context of a history of ideas—and thus can be made operational merely in a university library setting. This preference has resulted in academic traditions of Buddhist Studies that systematically favour the textual, doctrinal and philosophical above the ritual, social, economical, political and other aspects of non-modern Buddhist cultural complexes. Entirely in keeping with European secularized Protestant intellectual proclivities, such buddhologists regarded Buddhism mainly as a text-based philosophy, as continental philosophy was, at the inception of their field. This early academic perspective has nurtured an intellectual variety of philosophical Buddhism with a somewhat Protestant outlook. Implicitly we find a higher value and perceived authenticity for the old, the textual, for philosophical content and ("orthodox") monastic curricula, and a concomitant deprecation of ritual aspects, local varieties, popular and modern forms of Buddhism. The latter tended to be viewed as deviating, "heterodox", as degradations or even as decadent corruptions of a pure, old, scriptural philosophical core.

I am aware that such characterizations often are deployed in a dismissive manner, as if they were disqualifications per se. Presenting them here in a nutshell, unintentionally, may seem to reinforce that impression. Yet, I emphatically do not share these negative sentiments. Philology combined with a history of ideas is one of the most useful and best-equipped tool-bags that we presently have at our disposal in Buddhist Studies.

Modern, late modern, post-modern, & non-modern. Buddhism in the West is usually appreciated—if not, in some quarters, even cultivated—for its archaic and exotic appeal. Yet, at least on a popular level, Buddhism is also widely received and perceived, somewhat uncritically, as if it were a religion in a modern secularized sense; while for most of its history and in most regions, Buddhist traditions clearly functioned in non-modern contexts as a starkly different entity—I avoid the intentional term "pre-modern".

On closer analysis, forms of "Western" Buddhism are in fact more easily understood as specific developments within the phenomenon of "Western" new religions - which follow modern and late modern religious sensitivities - than they could be appreciated as entities comparable to forms of "ethnic" Buddhism in non-modern or regional Asian varieties. We seem to be dealing here with new Western religious phenomena that systematically refer to Buddhist culture, yet "structurally" are religious in an entirely modern or post-modern sense. So-called New Buddhism in the West is predominantly configured by modernist "Western" values—more often than not secularized Christian or Humanist—and also is best appreciated as such (I will not comment here on the involved issue of new Buddhist movements in Asia). In post-modernist intellectual and aesthetical milieus, it is not uncommon to encounter refined and highly aestheticized appreciations of Buddhism, which try to read Buddhist deconstructions of self, world and language as post-modern philosophy *avant la lettre* and could regard Lyotard, Deleuze and Derrida as ancient Buddhist philosophers incarnate.

More than anything else, we appear to be working with our (late) modern perceptions, if not projections, of what Buddhism is (to us). Based on those, we lavishly engage our own pet dichotomies, such as: religious and secular, nature and culture, male and female. Frequently one even meets forms of Buddhism that are associated with issues concerning ecology, social activism, gender issues and emancipation, as if these projected modernist issues would have a time-honoured and entirely natural place in a non-modern context, in a system based on world renunciation. Huge was the disappointment on the American West coast, when converts to Tibetan Buddhism learned what the Dalai Lama really thought about gay sex.

In addition, numerous artificial, inaccurate, but consequential dichotomies, such as contemporary and classical or living and textual Buddhism, in various ways relate to the issue of modernity, but appear to provide less of a relevant divide than modernity itself. The study of "Western" forms of Buddhism first and foremost needs to be accommodated in its native intellectual history, and requires (at least access to) such expertise.

If we were mainly concerned with the study of western forms of Buddhism, familiarity with local varieties of "Western" philosophical and religious traditions and their intellectual history, and with sociology of religion, it would definitely be more pertinent to our understanding than expertise in local Asian Buddhist traditions, in all their regional and historical diversity. Similarly, European varieties of secularized Trinitarian Christendom, when compared to early Middle Eastern Christianities, are also very different. Many prevalent misconceptions about Buddhism are due to a failure to appreciate this important distinction.

Homo hierarchicus - homo aequalis; world conqueror - world renouncer. Whatever the imprint that Louis Dumont, Jan Heesterman and Stanley Tambiah had on the academic community and beyond, following up on the former point—about appreciating the non-modern nature of the majority of its regional and religious phenomena—one way or the other, one will have to come to terms with the fact that Buddhism, at least ideologically, finds its origins in a system of renunciation. Renunciation provides an outlook on and also a seat in life that, even though certainly not completely absent, has never gathered or maintained sufficient mass and meaning in "Western" countries as to lead to a lasting and culturally accepted and recognized alternative. In our own religious environments, the monastic model of *vita contemplativa* has long ago lost out to a *vita activa*, in the world. Together with the previous point of the predominant non-modern forms of all but select recent varieties of Buddhist religious culture, lack of familiarity with the notion of renunciation may account for the majority of the extant confusion about what Buddhism traditionally stands for.

"Psychologizing" Buddhism. Consonant with general modernist trends toward interiorization of religion and the concomitant new imaginings of the self, there has been a (by now) long and honourable tradition of associating Buddhist contemplative expertise with psychology and of translating Buddhism in psychological terminology, starting with CAF Rhys Davids and including other well-known luminaries such as Nyanaponika Thera and David Kalupahana. Presently, Tibetan varieties of Buddhism and Bön also eagerly exploit psychologized and demythologized "actualistic" (*hic et nunc*) teaching models (e.g., Chögyam Trungpa and, particularly in the Netherlands, Han de Wit). The history of viewing Buddhist contemplative texts as first-person expertise on the human mind, on a par with psychology, reaches back to the very birth of psychology as a discipline, toward the end of the nineteenth century.[54] Far from being a non-modern emic category, psychological readings of Buddhism are, instead, among the main defining characteristics of Buddhist modernism.[55] Many people interested in Buddhism are influenced by this hermeneutical trend.

There is a shared common assumption that Buddhism, and particularly Buddhist abhidharma and epistemology, are based on meditative experience; that is, derive from some kind of first-person empirical observation (*à la* William James), in this case observations performed by contemplative specialists. The assumption is deemed warranted or plausible by intuition and on authority of grand, time-honoured traditions of storytelling (especially of the hagiographical type) and by the testimony, charismatic presence, and prestige of living Buddhist masters and saintly figures.

There also is a widespread assumption that while many Asian philosophies have remained geared toward "praxis", "Western" philosophical traditions instead—perhaps already shortly after ancient Greece—have become theoretical and "academic" in nature. Yet, the distinction "scholar-practitioner" may matter significantly more here than it, beyond rhetoric, does or ever seems to have done in most Buddhist countries. This should alert us that in this respect more significant and relevant insights may be won by studying the process of reception of Buddhism in the "West" and our own cultural configuration, than we may hope to find in a projected "East".

The facile apologetic side of this equation of Buddhism and psychology has critically been reviewed (Gómez 2004), as has the Jamesian assumption of a possibility of empiricism, based on first-person observation, through problematizing the category experience (Scharf 1995 and 1998, and others). It is very important to recognize such preconceived ideas and to understand their cultural matrix and dynamics. This again underlines the importance of studying the receiving culture for newly arising forms of Buddhism.

Buddhism without beliefs. A popular modernist variety is "Buddhism without beliefs", which systematically resists entertaining orientalist fantasies and religious mythology. It appeals to *brights* (a term coined by

Dennett cs.) and is denuded of belief in matters that do not sit easily with naturalism, such as reincarnation, ritual agency, or non-physical entities (cf. Batchelor, 1994, Hayes, 1998, and others). Wherever possible, it attempts to strip Buddhism of its metaphysical and religious assumptions, and reveal what are (variously) perceived to be its trans-culturally valid essentials, while still struggling to retain some kind of actualistic (re) interpretation of the overarching (metaphysical) frame of liberation (for obvious reasons, I hesitate to use the term *soter*iological here). It is in these circles that references to mainstream Buddhism are frequently heard.

In its popular form, this variety of Western Buddhism manifests as a streamlined, modernist-looking, and commercially exploitable Buddhism. It is characterized by an unprecedented attention to the psychological and the social. Revisionist projects of that ilk often shallowly peter out into a kind of "part-time feel-good Buddhism" that seems to forget the urgency of renunciation and loses its drive for liberation, and aims at redecorating samsara. It then easily becomes a respectable (or merely fashionable) pastime for religious dropouts who crave spirituality, for those who are seeking to add a magical spiritual touch to their post-modern fragmented sense of self, or aspire to bring spacious freedom to their oppressively stressful lives. Then again, it may also manifest in more hedonistic ways, as the desire to brush up a dull sex life by spiritual-looking means: acting out fantasies about tantric varieties of Buddhism—an attempt to have your cake and eat it at the same time.

In even more commercial, entirely practical and applied, and conventionally "non-religious" varieties, the ideology of liberation is abandoned (in complete disregard of the original ideological context of renunciation). This has resulted in various more or less commercial therapeutic, supplementary, and palliative uses of Buddhist theory and practice (in the style of "Zen and the art of management" or stress reduction through mindfulness training). These Buddhism-derived cultural forms seem to have gained a legitimate place in "Western" Buddhism, as well as elsewhere.

The (metaphysical) assumption of the possibility of liberation (first and third noble truths). Psychology, whether it manifests in descriptive, analytical, or other academic modes, and whether it is applied in therapeutic or palliative manners, in any case lacks the overall goal of liberation that deeply characterizes Buddhism. The same holds for different *rapprochements* of Western academic disciplines and Buddhist expertise, such as with philosophy, whether that is epistemology, phenomenology, or Whitehead's process ontology; or with theology.[56] The overarching frame in each instance is crucially different. Buddhist frameworks, as eventually formulated in the four noble truths, put limits to comparisons with systems that do not share the same points of departure.

Yet, this insight also provides useful points for further self-reflection. The same analyses that we perform, from an academic point of view, on Buddhist knowledge systems could also be applied to our own academic points of view. Upon closer analysis, we find structurally comparable culture-specific axioms underpinning academic methodologies that we employ for developing scientific theory. And axioms are axioms: they inherently cannot be tested and falsified (that is why they are axiomatic and not hypothetical) and in their intellectual history these not rarely go back to metaphysical and occasionally even theist religious assumptions. A good case in point is the so-called principle of parsimony, which is clearly formatted by metaphysical assumptions and was theistically mediated.

Academic analyses of Buddhist knowledge systems intellectually become more rewarding if we allow Manjushri's "sword of wisdom" to cut both ways. Ultimately, it may not be feasible to accommodate one set of knowledge systems (Buddhism) fully into the other (academia), and we may have no choice but reveal our own most basic assumptions in a true dialogue, fully aware that it would be problematic to prioritise, *a priori*, one system above the other. Study of sophisticated knowledge systems such that are met with in Buddhist traditions, if done in a proper and balanced manner, should challenge our own academic paradigms as well. Here lie fruitful fields of research that cut right across disciplines and connect, for instance, cognitive sciences to Buddhist epistemology.

Rhetorical and ideological aspects of text. Pending more extensive critical inquiry, it remains to be established to which extent Buddhist texts, for instance those on abhidharma and epistemology, really are what they are often presumed to be: résumés of so-called meditative experience, or whether they perhaps also or mainly are ideological and rhetorical devices that function in specific cultural contexts. The question then naturally arises what, if any, the ideological vectors of those rhetorical components might be. Thus, as part of a larger project of "production" of Buddhist culture, quite intriguing possibilities open up for an alternative take on the history of ideas of Buddhist philosophy—which, in religious contexts, consistently passes itself off as *au fond* empirically-based knowledge ("see for yourself"-style, *ehipassiko*). Here I include ideological and sociological aspects of text.

On a larger scale, one could think of issues such as the role of Buddhism in state formation and projects of social "reform" (in the Tibetan situation: breaking an inherently fragmented and unstable clan-based structure of society). On a smaller scale, one might consider the economics of competition for religious niches and that truly fascinating one-upmanship between Buddhist renunciates when building their religious charisma and respectability in local communities. We cannot be sure that we can take Buddhist epistemological and philosophical documents completely at face value and assume that they really are what they claim to be: grounded in first-person empirical observation. We should at least be prepared to question that.

In any case, the need for philosophical reflection and sociological expertise in order to understand the "production" of Buddhist culture properly (excuse the slightly outdated metaphor) should be obvious indeed.

Anti-intellectualism. Aficionados of Buddhism in the "West" and particularly self-styled religious practitioners, often show surprisingly little inhibition toward appropriating and owning Buddhism. Converts to Abrahamic traditions would not claim proficiency and expertise so soon, so eagerly and so easily. Their claims to expertise and pronouncements occasionally appear in almost complete disregard of the wide cultural variety and vast intellectual history of Buddhism. Are we prepared to defer judgement about Christianity to those steeped in the writ of the Church Fathers? Are we willing to acknowledge a long and complex intellectual history for more familiar religious systems—keenly or vaguely aware of many centuries of doctrinal disputes and factional dissent? Anyone who has attended a meditation course or devotedly tends to a Buddhist teacher is already considered a specialist, or at times ostentatiously behaves as such.

Exposure to Buddhist rhetoric of (direct) experience, particularly in schools that advocate the possibility of immediate experience and sudden enlightenment, such as some Zen schools (in new and later environments often incompletely or poorly understood; see Faure 1991, 1996 and 2003, McRae 2004, etc.), seem to have reinforced the idea that intellectual study and critical reflection not only are futile, but even can be counterproductive or harmful. Thus, the vague and highly problematic category of religious "experience" (Sharf 1995 and 1998) is prioritized as a kind of touching stone for all that is true and authentic, all that really matters in Buddhism. In a questionable interpretation of *shikantaza*, as perching on a *zafu* alone (a dharma item readily available through the Internet and the local New Age bookstore), in whichever form (not rarely abbreviated to a shallow kind of haemorrhoid Buddhism), is believed to grant privileged, direct access to the crucial Buddhist experience of emptiness, beyond words and concepts—an oxymoron if there ever was one. Occasionally, this results in incorrigible and intensely personal "Varieties of Religious Experience", which in reference to so-called first person empirical experience of the ineffable are raised beyond every suspicion and dispute. Needless to say, "covert" Buddhists of this kind—and they tend to come in droves—are exceedingly difficult to argue with.

Perhaps precisely because of the perceived low threshold of Buddhism, it is nearly impossible to get to reliable numbers for Buddhists in "Western" countries. Anyone who chooses to identify as a Buddhist is to be reckoned one. No Catholic or Muslim could get away with this, or would even dream of claiming religious belonging on such a frail basis.

Briefly put, the main causes for cognitive dissonance and confusion between convert and traditional Asian forms of Buddhism run along the following divides:

- Modern – post-modern – non-modern varieties of Buddhism.
- *Homo hierarchicus* & *homo aequalis* versus world conqueror & world renouncer: unfamiliarity with an ideological system of radical renunciation.
- "Psychologising" Buddhism and construction of Buddhism "without beliefs". Occasionally the overarching metaphysical Buddhist framework, i.e., the assumption of the possibility of liberation (the third noble truth), is abandoned. This leads to modernized but also various applied, often commercialized, palliative and therapeutic varieties of Buddhism.
- The systematic undervaluation of rhetorical and ideological aspects of text, based on naive literal readings of references to meditative states, as if, in a Jamesian sense, they were so-called first-person accounts of unproblematic "experience".
- Anti-intellectualism based on literalist readings of passages of, often factionally involved, rhetoric of immediacy (Chan/Zen/Son) and those ubiquitous references to transmission outside words and letters.

New "Western" Buddhism as Popular Counter-Culture

In order to understand and resolve these cognitive dissonances, we start from the reasoned working assumption that, sociologically, Buddhism in the "West" squarely falls within the perimeters of New Age religious counter culture, defined by Hanegraaff (1996) as popular Western culture criticism expressed in terms of secularized esotericism. He convincingly argues that New Age religion exhibits clear continuities with what he calls secularized Western esotericism, notably as it emerged in theosophical circles starting the turn of the nineteenth century.[57] The surge of popular New Buddhism also neatly coincides with the rise of the more recent New Age *movement* in the late Seventies. The latter is distinguished by Hanegraaff (1996) from the much older phenomenon of New Age *religion*, which is traceable to the nineteenth century and beyond. Theosophy, as a "Western" esoteric or occultist form of counter- culture, also has a long and respectable history in Europe, which reaches all the way back to oppositions between Greek rationalism and popular beliefs or the formation of European Christianities in opposition to Gnostic traditions (Webb 1971).

When we reframe the study of "Western" Buddhism in native counter-culture, the apparent contradiction of critical social, political and ecological agendas of New Buddhists suddenly becomes understandable. There are clear continuities in "Western" culture criticism (e.g., opposition to rationalism and scientism) and also in the engagement of the occult—secularized or otherwise.

Ex(er)cising Dichotomies

Our perception of Buddhism stands in a long history of construction of the "East", as a supporting alternative image of the "West": the "East" as the "other" and source of esoteric Gnostic insight and occult wisdom, first sought in the Middle East, and later further East. The construction of Buddhism, also outside Asia, partakes in wider and better studied colonialist, humanist, and romantic constructions of the "East". This opens our inquiry to fundamental reflection on mutually constitutive analytical dichotomies that, until the mid-twentieth century, often remained implicit and unquestioned, such as: centre and periphery, West and East, culture and nature, male and female. When examined, Asia also "uncloaks" as one of these. Nowadays, critical reflection on these dichotomies is commonly engaged in Asian Studies analyses: e.g., exposing ideological biases of Orientalism and imperialist colonial ideologies, theosophical constructions of the "East", or early European intellectual or Victorian perceptions of Buddhism, etc.

Today, not many would still be shocked to see that the surprisingly recent romantic nationalist invention of a Celtic fringe (e.g., Chapman 1992) and orientalist constructions of the "East" (Said etc.)—in various shades (and not without contradiction)—are *both* visualized as mysterious, female, spiritual, irrational, or wild, etc. The odd coincidence of seemingly similar characteristics clearly says more about how dominant discourse typically speaks about its periphery than it actually reveals structural similarities at those *perceived* fringes, be they Buddhist or "Celtic".

For some reason, the emergence of popular, practice-oriented New Buddhism has largely fallen through the grid of that critical scrutiny, and it is still customarily studied against the backdrop of a presumed "mainstream" Buddhism, which for the most part is a buddhological construct, and also of regional cultural forms of Asian Buddhism. That *status aparte* of modernist Global Buddhism relates to a universalizing rhetoric of, typically modernist, internalized "Buddhist *meditative experience*" that has dominated Western perceptions of what Buddhism "really" is about, a type of reinvention that has been mediated by modernist and Protestant varieties of Buddhism. That modernist bias has selectively opened Buddhism to religious studies, psychological, and philosophical interrogation, rather than to cultural and sociological analyses.

The most important data for such much needed cultural and sociological analyses are to be found in various records of (implicit) understandings of Buddhism.[58] For such analyses one should try, wherever possible, to keep the dynamic relationships (e.g. feedback loops) between Dutch "sanghas" and their possible Asian regional home bases in mind. These understandings also are to be contrasted with pertinent perceptions mediated in traditional sources (wherever available, e.g., "mindfulness" and *sati*). For instance, one could compare the portrayal of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in the Dutch media with his traditional roles in Tibetan communities; or his image among his Indian hosts. Religious practices, on the other hand, barely appear in the media in a systematic manner and are better addressed from angles of religious studies.

Thus, for the study of nascent Dutch Buddhism, mainly of "convert" varieties, we could add two relevant but neglected approaches and also allow a novel and more suitable analytical framing (so far, these merely are working assumptions, of course):

1 Rethinking the development of new religions: the contrast between entry in the past via elite culture and the present massive spread of new religions through commercial popular culture. This "new religious"

economy may functionally be parallel to the elite support of "state religion" in non-modern contexts. The crucial momentum of subsequent dissemination in those non-modern contexts, to broader layers of the population, also deserves systematic attention of course; in the case of Buddhism, more often than not an economy of ritual and other public services drives such developments.

2 The concomitant refocus from doctrinal religious to cultural and economical aspects: the mediation of emerging new religions through commercial, popular media and the impact of that economical basis on new religious paradigms. Consider, for example, issues of anti-intellectualism, which resonate with critical "Western" counter-culture and its resistance against seemingly overbearing rationalism.

3 The *Gestalt* switch of cultural mimicry: new Buddhism shows significantly more similarities with cultural forms of receiving modernities. A "Western" culture-critical discourse thus reflects itself in Buddhism. That mimicry seems to have an orientalist character.

Furthermore, expanding the scope:

1 Global Buddhism obviously is not limited to Dutch habitats. One may in fact argue that global aspects of New Dutch Buddhism may well defeat defining it nationally.

2 Traditional Buddhism in Asian regions and modernization in Asia, roughly since the nineteenth century, are relevant and widen the scope even further.

Appendix

Estimates and Numbers of Buddhists in the Netherlands

A brief chronological overview of estimates of Dutch "Buddhists":

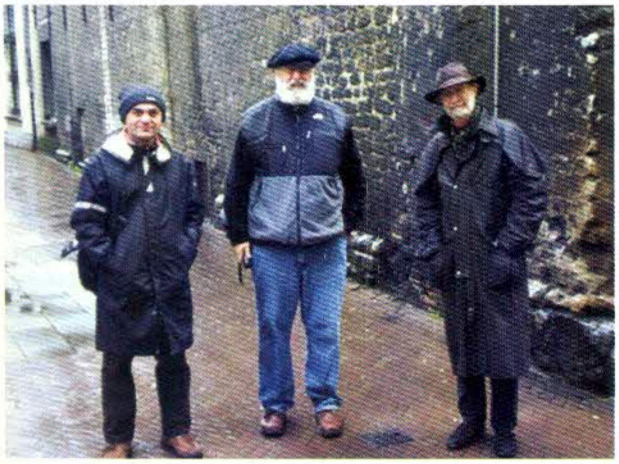
- In the census of 1971, 900 Buddhists were counted in the Netherlands. [59]
- Shortly before 1990, Victor van Gemert (1990) estimated the number of Buddhists in the Netherlands to be around 16,600, 4,000 of which he deemed "convert" Buddhists. He thus allowed a majority of so-called "migrant" Buddhists (both of first and later generations).
- In 1996, a working committee *Aanvraag Zendmachtiging Boeddhistische Omroep* (*Application Broadcasting License Dutch Buddhist Broadcast*) of the *Boeddhistische Unie Nederland* (BUN, the Dutch Buddhist Union), led by Drs (now Dr) Aad Verboom, estimated the total of Dutch Buddhists to be approximately 33,000: 20,000 were so-called ethnic Buddhist and 13,000 "convert" Buddhists.[60] As the name of the committee indicates, this estimate is part of an attempt to secure a licence for the BOS (*Boeddhistische Omroep Stichting*, or Dutch Buddhist Broadcast), which failed. Most of the following estimates were prepared with an eye on similar objectives.
- As the new millennium approached, the BUN, then chaired by Prof.dr Johan Niezing, calculated the total number of Dutch Buddhists to be about four times as large: 125,000. But this time they did not only target those whom they felt had formally become Buddhists at some point in their lives (it is difficult to provide a clear definition of this in late modern Europe) but also those who had "attestable affinities" (*daadwerkelijke affiniteit*) with Buddhism.[61]
- Until recently (see following) the BUN and BOS entertained the number of approx. 250.000 Dutch Buddhists as approximately 250,000. This number is used in the 2004 application for the BOS broadcasting licence.[62] Again, this included those who were deemed to have "attestable affinities" with Buddhism: 150,000 of which were thought to be "converts" and 100,000 migrants and their descendents. Note that the number of converts now far exceeds that for the "migrant" groups.
- In a recent self-evaluation by the BOS (for the period 2003-2007) the number of 250,000 stood for the total of not clearly defined "formal" Dutch Buddhists, while an additional 1,488,000 are counted as sympathizers or potential clients interested in Buddhist programming. The total estimate of the BOS constituency would thereby approach 1,750,000.
- The aforementioned NPO study by Paul van Hek (2010:23f)[63] indicates that no less than 847,000 people in the Netherlands find significant inspiration and direction in Buddhism: for 340.000 of those, Buddhism is the first source of inspiration.

Shrine of the XXXVI Saints in the St Andrieskerk in Antwerp, Belgium, which contains the purported relics of Saint Josaphat in one of its glass-covered chambers, such as shown below (copyright for both pictures, www.belgiumview.com).

Copyright www.belgiumview.com

The remains of St Salvator Abbey in Kleine Pieter Pot Straat: it once stood tall and proud in this quarter of Antwerp (© Blezer 2009)

Three intrepid pilgrims at the remains of St Salvator Abbey: left to right: drs. Stephan Detrez (Antwerp), host and guide; prof.dr. Richard Hayes (New Mexico); and drs Eric Hoogcarspel (Rotterdam).



Notes

1 See e.g., http://www.telegraaf.nl/binnenland/4006094/__Nederland_boeddhaseert__.html: *De Telegraaf*, May 26, 2009, "Nederland Boeddhaïseert!", and *De Volkskrant*, May 26, 2009, katern 1, p.2, "Boeddhabeeldjes zijn niet aan te slepen".

2 See, e.g. Leonie van Nierop in *NRC Handelsblad*, October 14, 2009, katern 1, p.2, "De Natte Vinger van de Boeddha" and Wierd Duk in *Elsevier*, July 24, 2010, pp.22–5, "Splijtzwam Boeddha", and January 15, 2011, p.24, "Polderboeddhisme, Boeddhazuil wankelt". See also note 39.

3 i.e., the former article 39f of the Dutch media law, now article 2.42.

4 The most relevant statistical data on Dutch Buddhism are to be found in recent surveys, often initiated by the BOS and also applications for broadcasting licence of the same. They are listed in the bibliography.

5 Until very recently, the main budget from the Dutch Buddhist Union (BUN) came from a deal with a provider for health insurance, dating from 2005 (see Jean-Karel Hylkema in the *Nieuwsbrief Boeddhistische Unie Nederland*, Zomer 2005, p.2, "BUN/ACHMEA collectieve ziektekosten-verzekering", http://www.boeddhisme.nl/zorgverzekering/brief_(para) medici_190606Frame.html), targeting members of groups connected to the BUN and other Buddhist customers (subscribers to *Vorm & Leegte*) and with a special Buddhist insurance policy. The wisdom of that complicated entanglement of interests has later been questioned; see, e.g., Perry Feenstra in *Trouw*, January 13, 2006, "Nieuwe polis voor boeddhisten: het nieuwe zorgstelsel heeft nu ook een speciale polis voor boeddhisten voortgebracht"; Joep Dohmen in *NRC Handelsblad*, August 3, 2007, "Polis voor boeddhist is niet populair"; and, more recently, on the impending devolvement, Wierd Duk in *Elsevier*, January 15, 2011 (p.24), "Polderboeddhisme, Boeddhazuil wankelt".

6 See e.g., Sharf (1995 and 1998), McMahan (2008), Hayes (1998).

7 Cf. Batchelor (1997).

8 Cf., e.g., Tucker (1977), Queen (1996), etc.

9 On Orientalism in New Age and the illusion of an 'oriental renaissance', cf. Hanegraaff (1996:517).

10 For their most curious inter-mediality cf. Brauen (2000) and Dodin (2001).

11 Many thanks to Dan Martin for arousing my interest with a reference to Jacobs' publication and to Stefan Detrez for his great hospitality and company in Antwerp, when ferreting out the relics. See also Martin's blogspot:http://tibeto-logic.blogspot.com/2010/01/buddhas-life-relics-found-in-antwerp.html, apparently relics have also been sighted in Rome, in the Vatican.

12 The actual names day of the apostle and patron saint is in November 30th, Barlaam & Josaphat's was on the 27th, the day before we visited; see the *Martyrologium Romanum* below, n.23. So we visited right in between two very auspicious dates, but apparently on a bad moment.

13 See Joseph Jacobs (1896), *Barlaam and Josaphat: English lives of Buddha, edited and introduced by Joseph Jacobs*, London D. Nutt, 1896.

14 Lang, DM (1966), *The Balavariani (Barlaam and Josaphat) A Tale from the Christian East Translated from the Old Georgian*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966.

15 From on-line description of an exhibition on "De augustijnen, de inquisitie en het ontstaan van de Sint-Andriesparochie (1514–1529)".

16 Ibid.

17 Note that in the seventeenth century, St. Salvator changed from a Priory to an Abbey (Cruys & Cheron 2003:4). See also next.

18 Marc van de Cruys & Marc Cheron 2003: *De Sint Salvator Abdij*, in Heraldiek van Abdijen en Kloosters (series of 8), Vol.7, Wijnegem, 2003.

19 We visited the remains of the Abbey in the Grote Pieter Potstraat (Pieter Pot, 1375?–1450, is the patron and founder of St Salvator charity). Only the chapel presently still remains. It was last used as rentable office space. When we visited, last Saturday, the chapel looked empty and deserted. Particularly on a dark and rainy day in November the chapel appeared sadly dilapidated.

20 Seehttp://users.telenet.be/Holsbeek/Publicaties/Artikels/HWH039C1.htm, Informatieblad Gemeente Holsbeek, 3de jaargang (2003), nr. 1, pp.21-23, with an entry on the relics of another one of those 36 Saints (to wit: Saint Hatabrandus or Hatebrandus).

21 Nieuwsbrief, "Sint Andries 2000", eerste Trimester 2009, p.2.

22 From on-line description of an exhibition on "De augustijnen, de inquisitie en het ontstaan van de Sint-Andriesparochie (1514–1529)".

23 See http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=71. For the legendary Indian Saint Josaphat, who is probably intended here, see the *Martyrologium Romanum* (1956), at the entry on *Barlaam et Josaphat apud Indos, 27 Novembris* (p.297f. of my Latin edition).

24 See, e.g., Dr. Ernst Kuhn, "Barlaam und Joasaph, Eine bibliographisch-literaturgeschichtliche Studie", in *Denkschriften und Reden der K. Bayer, Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 20. Bd. 1897 [= Denkschr. Bd. 67], pp.1-88.

25 There also is a small old (1901) local publication on the topic: *Geschiedenis van de Reliquieën der XXXVI uitmuntende Heiligen in St Andrieskerk, te Antwerpen alsmede Broederschap ter hunner eer opgericht, en van deszelfs Plechtige Diensten van 1671 tot heden*, Antwerpen, De Vlijt, 1901.

26 Almond, Ph. (1987), "The Buddha of Christendom: A Review of the Legend of Barlaam and Josaphat", in *Religious Studies*, Vol.23 pp.391–406, Cambridge 1987.. Now easily available at Jstor: http://www.jstor.org/pss/20019231.

27 See: http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/uten001twee01_01uten001twee01_01_0014.htm; http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/download.php?ec=uten001twee01_01; and http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/uten001twee02_01/.

28 To underline the power of these narratives, I confess that late in 2009, shortly after I learned of the possible presence of the "bodhisattva" relics in the St Andries Church in Antwerp, driven by a mixture of curiousity and devotion, a small international travel company, including Richard Hayes, visiting Leiden from New Mexico, Erik Hoogcarspel and Stephan Detrez, felt inspired to organize an impromptu pilgrimage to the presumed relics. With hindsight, I must confess that it was not very auspicious timing: rain kept pouring all day. I have pictures of a soaked bunch of scholars, looking very lost in Antwerp. To make things worse, the pious caretakers of the church were too busy to receive us. They were making preparations for an important local celebration: the name day of St Andries—yes indeed: none other than the patron saint of that church. What impeccable timing! They also did not seem too pleased to learn that some of us were visiting for other than Catholic concerns. The shrine, moreover, was covered and hidden from sight, after restoration. That is how pilgrimages go.

29 e.g. Zürcher (1959), Snellgrove (1987), Walter (2009), Kapstein (2000).

30 e.g., Sharf (1995 and 1998), Bechert (1994), Gombrich & Obeyesekere (1988), and Bond (1988).

31 Cf. the *Global Buddhism* initiative by Prebish and Baumann.

32 See the story of *Barlaam and Josaphat*, rendered by Philip Utenbroeke, addressed above.

33 e.g., Poorthuis & Salemink (2009), Baumann (2001), Almond (1988), and Tweed (1992).

34 Cf. the excellent recent study of Poorthuis & Salemink (2009).

35 De *Nederlandse Buddhistische Vriendenkring*, founded January 2, 1949 (den Boer 2007:2, cf. Janssen 1994 and den Boer in van Gemert 1990), which later, November 8, 1967 continued, partly in parallel and collaboration with the old organization, as the *Stichting Nederlands Buddhistisch Centrum*, which later again (1978), to avoid confusion with the newly formed *Boeddhistische Unie Nederland,* changed its name to *Stichting Vrienden van het Boeddhisme*, which it bears today.

36 Historical surveys should furthermore be based on: (1) scarce extant publications on Buddhism in the Netherlands; Dutch Buddhist journals and newsletters; journals on religion and mission; interviews; surveys; archives (also personal); foundational documents; statutes and mission statements; minutes of meetings; etc.; (2) ample secondary sources on Global Buddhism in North-Western Europe and the US; etc., particularly project 2, on international embedding, also engages history of ideas and culture analysis. Surveys may partly be implemented through the BUN, partly through interactive web content.

37 Cf. van Gemert (1990), Poorthuis & Salemink (2009), den Boer (2007).

38 See Appendix.

39 See, e.g., *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, January 24, 2001, "Schatting aantal boeddhisten is nattevingerwerk" and Pauline Weseman in *Trouw*, October 1, 2008 (katern 2, p.6), "Boeddhisten rekenen zich rijk met te hoge cijfers" and (katern 1, p.2) "Aantal boeddhisten lager" en "Zoveel Boeddhisten zijn er ook weer niet"; Leonie van Nierop in *NRC Next*, October 12, 2009, "Één beeldje van Blokker maakt nog geen boeddhist: Boeddhistische Omroep Stichting claimt zendtijd radio en televisie op basis van omstreden aantal van 900,000 volgelingen".

40 e.g., van Gemert (1990), Poorthuis & Salemink (2009), den Boer (2007), for other areas: Baumann (2001), Almond (1988), Tweed (1992), Paine (2005).

41 e.g., van Gemert (1990), Fields (1981), Baumann (2001).

42 e.g., the *Arya Maitreya Mandala* or the *Friends of the Western Buddhist Order*.

43 *De Boeddhistische Omroep Stichting*: http://www.boeddhistischeomroep.nl/ (Dutch language) and in English: http://www.buddhistmedia.com/defaultengels.aspx (Dutch language) and in English: http://www.buddhistmedia.com/defaultengels.aspx.

44 Now also part of Milinda/Asoka publishers: https://www.milinda-uitgevers.nl/asoka/vorm__leegte.

45 See: https://www.milinda-uitgevers.nl/asoka/actueel.

46 See Pauline Weseman in *Trouw*, February 11th 2009, "Varamitra stapt op als voorzitter van de BUN" and earlier, January 16, 2009 (katern 2, p.26) "Laat boeddhisten ook hier rustig hun weg zoeken"; cf. ibidem "Wie is Varamitra?".

47 See *Nieuwsbrief (De Mandalaschool Amsterdam)*, 1e Jaargang, Nummer 1 (September 2008) and Pauline Weseman in *Trouw*, June 14, 2008 (katern 2, p.10), "Boeddhisten dromen over eerste eigen basisschool". As matters look now, it seems unlikely that the Mandala School in Amsterdam, in this form, will materialise any time soon, , see http://www.mandalaschool.nl/ and Wierd Duk in Elsevier, January 15, 2011, p.24, "Polderboeddhisme, Boeddhazuil wankelt".

48 Seehttp://www.ad.nl/ad/nl/1000/Nieuws/articledetail/491382/2010/06/17/Boeddhisten-naar-de-Vrije-Universiteit.dhtml: *Algemeen Dagblad*: "Boeddhisten naar de Vrije Universiteit".

49 *Verzuiling*, literally "pillarization", is a difficult word to translate; it roughly means compartmentalization of Dutch society, mainly on confessional grounds (see e.g. Blom, 2000).

50 The conventions of believers, to contribute small donations to their church via collecting boxes.

51 Van Gemert (1990).

52 See *MediaOnderzoek & -Advies (MO&A)* of the *Nederlandse Publieke Omroep* (NPO) on behalf of the *Boeddhistische Omroep Stichting* (BOS): *Resultaten Enquête Boeddhisme in Nederland*, by Paul van Hek, Hilversum, April 2010

53 See, e.g., *Trouw*, 18 september 2008 (katern 2, p.6), "Overheid Erkent Geestelijke Verzorgers Boeddhistenunie"; *Elsevier*, November 24, 2008, "Boeddhistisch verzorger erkend in gevangenis".

54 See, e.g., Schultz, DP, and Schultz, SE (2004). For critical reflection on this assumption, see also Gómez, L (2004).

55 Internalization, individualization and psychologization of religion simply were the cutting edge discourse at the time of the first major introduc-

tion of Buddhism to the "West"; and the establishment of global forms of Buddhism bears the stamp of that early intellectual climate.

56 Cf. Jackson & Makransky 2000, and Cabezón in the former.

57 Cf. also Risseeuw (2000), who also identifies some changes over time. Consider, for example, the impact of the theosophical movement on the modernization of Buddhism in Asia and on the early perception and reception of Buddhism outside Asia, also at the turn of the nineteenth century. In other respects the timeframe is comparable as well.

58 One could think of source materials such as: extant Dutch non-fiction on Buddhism, including travel literature; personal narratives on blogs and network sites (Twitter, Hives, etc.); Dutch literary works; the selection of titles and implied commercial strategies of Asoka publishers; content, editorial & commercial policies, and design of the Buddhist glossy *Vorm & Leegte*; content and programming choices of the BOS—see particularly the recent BOS documentary on the history of Dutch Buddhism—special attention is due to editorial decisions in the production of their documentaries; Buddhist flyers, study materials, announcements of lectures and seminars, mission statements, statutes, foundational documents, minutes, the content and selection of libraries and archives of Buddhists & Buddhist organisations, etc.; Representation of Buddhism in news items, infotainment, commercials, etc.; International (new) media that gained popularity in the Netherlands, including YouTube, Wikipedia, and the like; Buddhism as an icon in (decorative) art and design.

59 Cf. den Boer, JA den (2007): lecture by drs. Jacques den Boer at the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the *Stichting Vrienden van het Boeddhisme*, previously *Stichting Nederlands Buddhistisch Centrum*, Sunday November 18, 2007, in Spiritueel Centrum De Roos, Amsterdam.

60 See publicity regarding these estimates, "In Nederland 33,000 boeddhisten', in the Buddhist quarterly: *Kwartaalblad Boeddhisme*, Jaargang 2, Number 2, Winter 1996, p.36. *Kwartaalblad Boeddhisme* was previously called *Saddharma* and now *Vorm & Leegte*, already mentioned above.

61 This relates to a court ruling, that those could be counted for the purposes of a broadcast license of the BOS.

62 Aanvraag voor een zendmachtiging voor radio en televisie, ex. art. 39f van de mediawet, door de Boeddhistische Unie Nederland, September 2004.

63 *MediaOnderzoek & -Advies* (MO&A) of the *Nederlandse Publieke Omroep* (NPO) on behalf of the *Boeddhistische Omroep Stichting* (BOS): *Resultaten Enquête Boeddhisme in Nederland*, by Paul van Hek, Hilversum, April 2010.

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Very useful resources also are the applications for a broadcasting licence by the BOS:

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Aanvraag voor een zendmachtiging voor radio en televisie, ex. art. 39f van de mediawet, door de Boeddhistische Unie Nederland, Hilversum, September 2004; and

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ESSAY 29

Buddhism in Germany, Austria and Switzerland

Martin Baumann

Introduction

During the past thirty years, Buddhism has experienced an enormous growth with the founding of local groups and the establishment of nationwide organizations in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. This parallels similar developments in other European countries as well as countries beyond Europe. Though present in these countries for more than a century, the dharma and sangha were only firmly established from the 1980s onwards. As in other European countries, characteristically the "two Buddhisms" (Prebish 1993, Numrich 1996) of Asian immigrant Buddhists and European converts constitute what is generally called the "Buddhist community". However, far from forming a homogenized minority, a variety of Buddhist schools, orders, and traditions established themselves in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. As such, "Buddhism" in these countries is defined by diversity and difference, but also by inter-Buddhist encounter and dialogue.

This essay provides a sketch of the historical development of Buddhism in Germany, Austria and Switzerland and points to the endeavours to establish a unified umbrella organization to represent Buddhism in each country. Though speaking the same language, German (Switzerland also includes French and Italian) the present situation is quite different in each country due to cultural, political, and juridical contexts. In addition, the essay highlights some general observations with regard to processes of standardization and inner-Buddhist tensions as well as the prospects for Buddhism in the twenty-first century in these countries.

Early Encounters: Selective Reception

In contrast to the American and Australian experience, the first Buddhists in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland – and generally in Europe – had not been labour migrants from Asia, but European converts. The discovery of the teachings of the Buddha began through philosophical treatises and philological translations in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. As such, texts and descriptions became known in literate and academic circles, and enthusiasm for the East gained momentum. In particular, the Romantic Movement with its rejection of the pre-eminence of rationalism and emphasis on poetry, art, and nature discovered the Asian world and its religious and philosophical traditions. German Sanskritist Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) coined the term "Oriental Renaissance" for the movement in 1803, highlighting like many fellow romantics the longing for a genuine spirituality in India. Sanskrit texts would enable re-connection to a pure and unpolluted religiousness, supposedly lost in Europe dominated by decadent Christian Churches (Halbfass 1988, Batchelor 1994: 250-254).

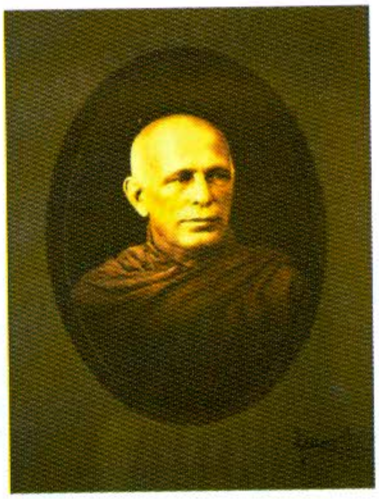
In Germany, it was through the writings of philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) that artists, academics and intellectuals became interested in Buddhist philosophy and ethics. As later observers remarked, Schopenhauer's philosophy paved the way for a wider interest in Buddhist ethics and ideas. On the other hand, his one-sided understanding of Buddhism as basically a teaching of pessimism promoted the image of Buddhism as a nihilist philosophy long into the twentieth century. Further translations and studies during the middle of the nineteenth century enabled an enhanced knowledge and understanding of the teachings. Frankly speaking, Buddhism was not sent from abroad, but it was fetched from within by Western orientalists.

German Indologist Hermann Oldenberg (1854-1920), with his Pali based study *Buddha: His Life, his Doctrine, his Order* (1881, English translation 1882), contributed to establishing the Buddha as a historic figure and popularizing Buddhism more than any other work of the time in the German-speaking area. He held that the Pali canon represented the authentic, original and pure Buddhist teachings, devoid of mythologies, interpretations and accretions of later tradition. Oldenberg's groundwork was followed by the important translations of Austrian Indologist Karl Eugen Neumann (1865-1915), succeeded by German Indologist Karl Seidenstücker (1876-1936).

With characteristic Protestant emphasis on the written text, Oldenberg, Neumann, Seidenstücker and others developed the approach that considered the Pali canon to be the authoritative access to the word of the Buddha. The shift from Tibetan, Chinese and Nepalese treatises as the sources of early reception towards the study of Pali texts since the 1880s reinforced a demythologizing and anti-ritual attitude. Strikingly, it mirrored the prominent evolutionist attempt to track down the Buddhism that was most ancient and unpolluted. With a typically anti-Catholic attitude, later developments of tradition and organization were held as priestly corruptions and distortions. The scholars by-passed established Buddhist traditions and interpretations and ignored the way Buddhism in South Asia was lived and practiced. Interest was oriented towards ethical, philosophical, and scientific concepts which proved well-fitting to the discursive pattern of a "true" modern religion.

This predominant text-based modernist pattern imprinted the adoption of Buddhist teaching among most pioneer converts in Germany and Austria at the turn of the century. The first Buddhists had been so-called 'self-converted followers of the teaching'. These were either the German Paul Carus or Austrian Karl Eugen Neumann. Both took up a Buddhist worldview by way of reading, especially the treatises of Schopenhauer. Carus (1852-1919), son of a Protestant pastor, seems to have been a Buddhist as early as 1880, as his publication *Songs of a Buddhist* (1882) shows. Neumann, son of a music director and a Hungarian aristocrat, embraced Buddhism in 1884 and dedicated his life to the translation of the Pali canon. Neumann's translation not only intended to render Buddhist stories and teachings into German, but also to transform the passages in poetic language in order to appeal to the urban bourgeois audience of the late nineteenth century. Later Buddhist translators such as the Berlin Buddhist, Paul Dahlke, criticized Neumann's rendering as free and fanciful.

The growing interest in Buddhist ethics and philosophy gained momentum organizationally, for in 1903 Seidenstücker founded the first Buddhist Society in Europe, the Society for the Buddhist Mission in Germany (in Leipzig). It was a non-affiliated society of lay Buddhists, whose members joined by signing a confirmation. During the following decade, further organizations were established, although often short-lived. Seidenstücker reversed his Protestant upbringing as a son of a pastor to become an outspoken critic of state Protestantism and papist Catholicism. In his opinion, Christianity was dogmatic, authoritarian, and faith-based and a principal cause of the decline of values and morals in Europe. In contrast, Buddhism was non-violent, a religion of reason and insight, based on empirical evidence and autonomous ethics, emphasizing personal responsibility. As such, "Buddhism is the religion of the future", as Seidenstücker emphatically ended his polemic treatise *Buddha and Christ: A Buddhist apologetic* (1903 in German).



Nyanatiloka Maha Thera

The adoption had been dominated by ethical and intellectual interests in the teaching of Southern and Theravada Buddhism. Cognitive and rational contents of the teachings were stressed. These served as formal point of entry to Buddhist religion. Buddhism was praised as the "religion of reason", the religion which alone rested on insight and knowledge. In pamphlets, books and public lectures, the first professed Buddhists tried to win members from the educated middle and upper class. The Buddhist circles and societies remained numerically small and were seen as more or less strange and exotic. Many of these early Buddhists approached Buddhism as little more than a hobby which left their lives, in all other respects, unchanged (Baumann 1993: 54-59).

Around 1900: From Reasoning to Practice

In contrast to this intellectual reception, the first man from the German-speaking area to wholeheartedly practise the Buddhist teaching decided to travel to South Asia and become a monk. Nyanatiloka, a former German violinist Anton WF Gueth (1878-1957), who was ordained Theravada monk in 1904 in Burma, was the person concerned. Nyanatiloka reports in his autobiography that he studied Schopenhauer at length in his teens and started to live the asceticism valorized in Schopenhauer's philosophy. "From about my seventeenth year I renounced alcohol and smoking, which I recognized as being harmful to body, mind, and morals. [...] from about the beginning of 1899, I became a vegetarian based on ethical grounds. After a lecture in the vegetarian restaurant Ceres given by the famous theosophical speaker Edwin Boehme, I became an enthusiastic follower of Buddhism, more by feeling than through intellectual understanding" (translated by Carrithers 1983: 33).

This statement underscores the close connection of alternative movements such as life-reform, vegetarianism, Theosophy, and Buddhism, at that time. Also, Nyanatiloka's way to become a Buddhist was paradigmatic for many devotees: he grew up in a bourgeois urban family, received a good education, read Schopenhauer, and got into contact with life-reform ideas and spiritual searchers such as Theosophists in his late teens. For many such seekers and culture-critics of the *fin-de-siècle*, it was popular to find guidelines for an ethically-based life in pre-modern history of Europe and the emerging history of non-European religions (Kippenberg 2002). In line with the romantic Oriental renaissance, many hoped to find the unpolluted and original religion in India. As such, romantic Buddhists earnestly hoped to bring about a regeneration of European values through the ethics and teaching of the Buddha.

A few years after his ordination, Nyanatiloka and other German Buddhists started plans for a monastery in Germany or Switzerland. However, critics and Christian theologians strongly criticized Buddhism as "devastating nihilism" and "wretched pessimism" (Falke 1903: 70; Römer 1910: 162). In Germany, the Emperor Wilhelm II had likewise publicly declared his disapproval of Buddhism in the 1890s. The political reservation directed Nyanatiloka to Switzerland and the first Buddhist activities there.

The monk took residence in southern Switzerland to spend the winter of 1909-10 in an Alpine shepherd's chalet. The 32-year-old Nyanatiloka, dressed in a traditional Theravada monk's robe and scanty sandals, writes in his autobiographical notes that he suffered from the snow and the "unspeakable cold'" (quoted in Hecker 1995: 29, translation by Martin Baumann). After a brief excursion to northern Africa he was invited to Lausanne to stay in the "Caritas-Viharo", owned by the wealthy industrialist Bergier. It was there that a Buddhist ordination was conducted for the first time in European history when in October 1910 the 23-year-old German Bartel Bauer became a novice. As donations for the planned vihara remained meagre, Nyanatiloka left for Ceylon, where he founded the famous Island Hermitage on the island of Polgasduva in 1911. This island purchased by Bergier and presented to Nyanatiloka became an important venue for Western monks. It was there that the physician Arthur Graz from Graz joined Nyanatiloka and became first Austrian Theravada monk (Carrithers 1983: 26-45, Hecker 1995, Baumann 2000: 154-155, Hutter 2001: 100).

Temple

In Germany in particular, after the devastating experience of World War One, Buddhists emphasized the need for practicing the teachings. Although some small circles continued to aesthetically play with Buddhist ideas, in contrast newly-founded 'parishes' emphasized religious practices such as worship, spiritual exercises, and devotional acts. The teachings were considered not only to be important for the mind and intellect, but also to the whole person.

In 1921, Georg Grimm (1868-1945), a former Catholic judge, together with Karl Seidenstücker, initiated the "Buddhist Parish for Germany" in Munich. The parish saw itself expressly as a religious community of lay Buddhists. Its members had resorted to the Three Jewels, i.e. to the Buddha, dharma and sangha, and followed the five ethical precepts. Lectures held by Grimm were attended by an audience of 500 to, occasionally, 1,000.

In Berlin, Dr Paul Dahlke (1865-1928), a homeopathic physician and Buddhist since 1900, made plans to establish a place for Buddhism. In 1924, some fourteen years after Nyanatiloka's attempt for a vihara, Dahlke and a few close followers founded the Buddhist House. In his inauguration speech Dahlke emphasized, "the aim and intention of the house is [...] to create a local focal point, a permanent home for Buddhism in the West" (Dahlke 1925a: 86). There, in the "secure place of outer and inner purity" (Dahlke 1925b: 8), the tireless Dahlke put his ideals of renunciation, purification, and self-cultivation into practice. His view of Buddhism as a "teaching of reality" culminated in his adopting an ascetic and virtually monastic way of life. Similar to Nyanatiloka, Dahlke praised the same attitudes and ideals, originating from the German romantic ideas of loneliness, self-cultivation, and moral heroism (see in detail, Baumann 2006).

Grimm and Dahlke shared divergent interpretations of the teachings of the Pali Canon. This led to the formation of two independent schools, polemically in dispute with each other regarding the central teaching of *anatta* ("no-self"). Both schools continued their work during the period of Nazi domination (1933-45), albeit restricted to small, private circles, at times under Nazi political control. Buddhists were regarded by the Nazis as pacifists and eccentrics. With the exception of those who had abandoned their Jewish faith and become Buddhists – about a third of all Buddhists during the 1920s – no official or public persecution of Buddhism took place.

During the war, Switzerland remained neutral and succeeded in not being subjugated by Nazi Germany. Max Ladner (1889-1963) inspired some Buddhist activities during the 1940s and 1950s when about twelve to fifteen people met once a month in his house. The Zurich-based group published the Buddhist journal *Die Einsicht*. With its demise in 1961, the group ended as well. Although there had been a few scattered individual Buddhists in Austria, no further Buddhist organizations came into being until the late 1940s.

In general, from the 1880s to late 1940s, the teachings and texts of the Pali canon and the Theravada monk as the ideal model had dominated the adoption of Buddhism in the three German-speaking countries. Philosophical, ethical and cognitive interests stood out clearly. The norm of a Buddhist was conceived of as a rational, detached person, who intellectually purifies himself (seldom herself) from the root defilements of ignorance, hatred and lustfulness. Also, the idea of Buddhism as the oldest ethical teaching of mankind brought romantic seekers to embrace Buddhism. Rationalist and romantic Buddhists alike praised the Buddha and his teaching as a means to heal German culture from its moral decline – both at the *fin-de-siècle* and after World War One.

Buddhism around 1900 and in the 1920s clearly formed an international movement with mutual visits, exchanges of letters, and reports on Buddhism in other regions of the world. This strengthened the endeavours of the numerically small groups and engendered a consciousness of a coherent movement of German pioneer Buddhists. Quite a few Buddhists such as Neumann and Dahlke had visited South Asia, whereas famous Asian modernist Buddhists such as Anagarika Dharmapala and DT Suzuki came for speaking tours in Germany or a visit to Switzerland. These mutual exchanges and contacts underscored the transnational characteristic of an increasingly global Buddhism. Furthermore, the supposedly rigid boundaries set up between "Europe" and "the East" or "the Orient" (Said 1978), were being questioned with the idealistic adoption of Orient-Asian ideas, concepts, and ritual practices. As such, quite a number of the early Buddhists acted and thought beyond national categories.

From the Late 1940s Onwards: Plurality, Immigration and Establishment

In contrast to the first half of the twentieth century, the second half witnessed the establishment of the sangha and of Buddhist institutions in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. World War Two brought an end to all public Buddhist activities in these countries. However, after 1945, German Buddhists reconstructed former groups and founded new ones such as city societies in Berlin, Munich, and Hamburg. In addition, Buddhist missionary activities from South Asia gained momentum. For example, the jeweller Asoka Weeraratna (1917-1999) had set up the Lanka Dharmaduta Society (Lankan Society for the Spreading of the Teaching) in Colombo in 1952, and following the purchase of the dilapidated Buddhist House built by Dahlke, from 1958 onwards Theravada bhikkhus were sent to Berlin in order to spread the Dharma (Bhikkhu Bodhi 2000, Weeraratna 2000).

In Austria, Otto Pühringer, Fritz Hungerlieder and others founded the Buddhist Society, Vienna in 1947. They organized Buddhist lectures and discussions, and, due to few resources, exchanged the few Buddhist books they possessed. Hungerlieder remained president of the Austrian society from 1955 to 1976, emphasizing a Theravada orientation. After a visit to Japan in 1961, he started Zen retreats. Despite all his efforts and tireless lecturing, the number of practising Buddhists did not rise above thirty regular practitioners (Hutter 2001: 101). In Switzerland, the Pali Buddhist oriented group around Max Ladner remained small and dissolved in 1961.

From the 1950s onwards, new Buddhist traditions with a Mahayana inclination came to Europe. Tibetan Buddhism won its first convert followers in Berlin in 1952 through the establishment of the Western branch of the order Arya Maitreya Mandala. This first explicitly Western Buddhist order was founded by the famous German-born Lama Govinda (1898-1985) in 1933 in India. Japanese Jodo Shinshu was established in Germany (1956). The writings of Suzuki and Eugen Herrigel (1884-1955) made known Zen meditation and art.

During the 1960s, a considerable change was seen in the way that members and interested people wanted to experience Buddhism spiritually and physically. Meditation became very popular. A longing for the East was apparent in those days, a search for mystical and spiritual experiences. Hermann Hesse's narrative account of the Buddha in *Siddhartha* (1922) became very popular and an entry for many spiritual searchers to awaken an interest in Buddhist ideas in particular. Courses in vipassana meditation (Theravada tradition) and Zen meditation were booked up well in advance. Zen seminars (*sesshins*) took place in increasing numbers; Japanese teachers (*roshis*) came from Japan to guide the newly-founded Zen groups. In addition, increasing numbers of young Europeans had started to travel to India or Burma in search of "Indian spirituality" and religious guidance. The romantic yearning for wholeness and originality was sought – again – in the East.

After the Zen boom of the 1960s and 1970s, a fascination for Tibetan Buddhism and its teachers arose. Tibetan teachers (*lamas*) had first come to Switzerland, England, and France in the late 1960s and had established centres for teaching and liturgy. From the mid-1970s, however, as further high-ranking lamas conducted preaching tours in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (generally in Europe), Tibetan Buddhism took off. Many members of the protest movements and the counterculture of the late 1960s became fascinated by Tibetan Buddhist rituals, symbols and the lives of the *lamas*, whom they considered inspirational, sensitive and endowed with a charisma. Many hoped that Tibetan Buddhism would re-enchant what they considered a coldly rational society (Bitter 1988). In addition, the captivating appearances of the fourteenth Dalai Lama inspired the Western followers. Since his first journey to Europe in 1973, the Dalai Lama has repeatedly visited centres in Switzerland, Austria and Germany. For many, the Gelugpa monk is a living symbol and embodiment of deep spirituality, social engagement and altruism. Within just two decades, converts to Tibetan Buddhism founded a multitude of centres and groups, providing new homes for exiled *lamas* as well as western teachers.

The new interest in meditation, and spiritual and devotional Buddhist practices since the mid-1960s, has resulted in a broadening of the social group from which Buddhists come: in the early phases, it was the established upper and better-educated stratum of society. A much larger section of the population has since found its way into Buddhist centres and lectures. A considerable number of adherents, however, still belong to the middle classes; they are people in the caring professions, academics, and students. The average age varies considerably: many who are in their twenties are to be found in the Tibetan Buddhist groups. The Karma-Kagyu centres affiliated to Ole Nydahl in particular have attracted young people from the alternative scene. The members of the Theravada groups are in their fifties or older. The average age of practitioners of Zen is between twenty-five and forty years of age (Bitter 1988, Baumann 1993: 230-234, Kantowsky 1993: 150).

The rapid growth in interest in Buddhist practices and ideas, accompanied by an expansion of the already existing institutions, led to a considerable rise in the number of Buddhist groups and centres. In Germany, interest in Buddhism resulted in an exponential increase from forty groups in 1975 to more than 500 meditation circles, groups, centres and societies in 1999 (Baumann 2001: 19) and an estimated 650 to 700 in 2010. A multitude of different Buddhist schools, traditions and orders have established a firm footing in Germany with a clear concentration of fifty and more Buddhist groups and centres in cosmopolitan cities such as Berlin, Hamburg, Munich and the Cologne/Bonn region. Most numerous are Buddhist organizations in Tibetan und Zen traditions, followed by Theravada and vipassana meditation groups (e.g. the one following the teachings of late Ayya Khema). Importantly, the size of the groups and organizations vary considerably: there are local groups with some ten to fifteen members (often affiliated to a larger centre or nation-wide Buddhist organization); groups with twenty to fifty members with self-administered space for meetings, ritual, and meditation; established centres and Buddhist houses with some fifty to 150 members, offering a regular weekly programme; city umbrella societies and nation-wide Buddhist organizations such as a specific Tibetan Buddhist and Zen schools with at times several thousand members (Baumann 1993: 415-429). The total is hard to state: informed guesses reckon around 100,000 to perhaps 150,000 "convert" Buddhists and around 120,000 to 150,000 "immigrant" Buddhists and their offspring (see below). There about 250,000 to a maximum 300,000 Buddhists in Germany (if the guesses are correct): they represent 0.3 to 0.4% of Germany's population of 82 million (2010).

In Austria and Switzerland, interest led to the formation of numerous local groups, centres and Buddhist houses. In Switzerland, the total number grew from a very few groups and institutions in the early 1970s to almost 100 groups, centres and monasteries in the late 1990s (Baumann 2001: 157) to about 180 groups and centres in 2008 (Weigelt 2009: 774). Weigelt states that Theravada groups and societies constituted some 22% and Mahayana groups (Zen in particular) some 33% of all Buddhist institutions in Switzerland. The largest section, with some 43% of Buddhist groups and organizations, is made up of Tibetan Buddhist groups and centres. As in Germany, a concentration of groups and societies can be traced to conurbations and cities, with twenty-three Buddhist groups and centres in Zurich alone and around fourteen to eighteen groups and societies in Basle, Bern and Geneva.

In numerical terms, there are some 3,000 to 6,000 Swiss-born Buddhist converts and around 20,000 Buddhists from Asian Buddhist countries. With around 25,000 Buddhists among 7.6 million people the percentage comes to 0.3% of the total population in 2010.

In Austria, the late 1960s with its alternative culture, with a focus in Vienna, brought about a generational change within the Buddhist landscape. Young spiritual seekers looked for religious alternatives to the dominant bourgeois and fossilized Roman-Catholicism. Books and initial visits by Asian teachers developed a growing interest in Tibetan Buddhism and Zen. The Dalai Lama visited Austria in 1973, followed by a visit of the sixteenth Karmapa in 1977. The Karma Kagyu spread due to the untiring efforts of Ole Nydahl and numerous groups and centres were founded during the following years. Also, Zen and other Buddhist traditions were established in Vienna and larger towns such as Graz, Linz, Innsbruck and Salzburg. Numbers for Buddhist groups and centres are hard to assess but they seem to be much lower than in neighbouring Switzerland. Buddhists number from 17,000 to 20,000 people, including the comparatively few Asian Buddhists of some 5,000 immigrants. In total, we also find a minimal percentage of 0.25% among the 8.3 million people in Austria in 2010.

Conspicuously, in all three countries by far the largest number of groups and centres were founded by converts. However, the comparably few institutions set up by immigrant Buddhists should not distract from the fact that numerically, Buddhist immigrants form the larger part of the Buddhist minorities in Germany and Switzerland. It started during the 1960s when Switzerland offered one thousand Tibetan refugees a new home, with another one thousand Tibetans admitted over the following years. In order to care for the spiritual and cultural needs of the refugees, on behalf of the fourteenth Dalai Lama the Monastic Tibet Institute was founded in 1968 in Rikon near Winterthur. The Institute was deliberately established as both an academic and a monastic-religious institution, administering to the religious needs of the Tibetans and their offspring as well as conducting research and publishing studies. The monastery accommodates five to eight Tibetan monks and was visited by the Dalai Lama continuously from 1973 to 2010 (latest visit). The greatest event held there to date was the Kalacakra initiation in 1985, which was performed by the Dalai Lama and attended by approximately 6,000 people, Westerners and Tibetans alike.

A sister monastery was founded 1981 near Feldkirch, western Austria. The monastic centre Tashi Rabten developed to become the headquarters of Gelugpa Buddhism in Austria, similar to the Tibetan Centre in Hamburg/North Germany and the Rabten Choeling near Mont Pèlerin/Lasuanne in West Switzerland.

Since the late 1970s larger groups of refugees, migrants and businessmen from Asian countries came to Germany and Switzerland, but much less to Austria. The largest group was made up of refugees from South Vietnam, fleeing as boat people due to the communist takeover of power in 1975. In Germany, some 120,000 Vietnamese were admitted as quota refugees, approximately half of them Buddhists. Having secured a safe legal status and integration into the work process, the Vietnamese founded the Vien Giac monastery with a large temple hall in Hanover (mid-north Germany) in 1991(Ho 1999, Baumann 2000b: 59-91). This pagoda became the focal point of Vietnamese Buddhists and their cultural activities, followed by a second big pagoda, Phat Hue, near Frankfurt/Main in 2002. In Switzerland, Vietnamese refugees number some 10,000 people, who were also

Rikon

Vesak Festival

admitted as quota refugees. In addition, refugees from Cambodia and Laos arrived in much smaller numbers. Also, it needs to be mentioned that some 10,000 Thai people arrived in both Germany and Switzerland, the majority being women as marriage partners of Swiss and German husbands. Though living in a bi-national marriage, most Thai women sought to continue their Theravada Buddhist heritage. Monasteries with resident monks to conduct rituals were founded, and the annual Buddhist festivals were held near Frankfurt/Main and near Olten/North Switzerland. In particular the Swiss Thai monastery, the representational Wat Srinagarindravaram - founded in 1996 and enlarged by a temple in 2003 - aims to provide religious service, education and cultural support for the Thai immigrants.

The Wat, the pagodas and other Buddhist temples aim to preserve the religious-cultural identity and heritage of the immigrants. By visiting pagodas and temples, performing customary acts of devotional worship, and jointly celebrating Buddhist festivals, the Asian Buddhists gain a home away from home. More often than not, many Asian migrant communities have turned out to be markedly conservative, presenting a stable and familiar environment for their members in the socio-culturally foreign, often discriminatory, environment. Changes are inevitable, however, as the second and third generations grow up and aim to combine their religious-cultural heritage with Western ideas, aspirations and ideals. Role models are changing, hierarchies are shifting, and calls are heard for modernizing rituals and performing them in the German language.

Buddhism and the State: "Ecumenical Buddhism"

In organizational terms, Buddhists in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland usually set up a society or association according to the national regulations. Some of these societies have been officially registered, others were not. This organizational form already departs from established models in Asia, though since the late nineteenth century Buddhist modernists adopted the form of society in Asian countries as well. However, if Buddhists wish to be entitled to special rights and privileges in a country, such as access to the media, financial support, the same legal standing and recognition as Christian churches, or the right to teach in school, unavoidable specific requirements have to be met. Complying with these state requirements has usually involved the setting up of specific organizational structures.

In Austria, Buddhist spokespersons had striven for the recognition of Buddhism by the state since the mid-1970s. To achieve this end, a unifying Austrian Buddhist Association, headed by a democratically elected committee, had to be established. Having fulfilled this and many other specific requirements, in 1983 the Austrian state officially recognized Buddhism as a religion entitled to special rights such as to teach Buddhist religion in school, to have access to broadcasting time on TV and radio. The Association as the umbrella organization of Buddhist groups and traditions in Austria thus became the acknowledged representative of Buddhism in Austria. Former president Fritz Hungerleider noted in 1983 that this recognition of a "non-theistic religion in a country with a predominant Catholic populations constitutes a 'historic sensation'" (quoted in Hutter 2001: 103).

In early 2011, twenty-three traditions, orders and centres are members of this umbrella organization. They include the whole spectrum from Theravada, Mahayana and Tibetan Buddhism as well as non-affiliated and Western Buddhist centres and schools. Compared to a decade earlier (late 1990s), the formerly large number of traditions and schools not affiliated to the Association has diminished considerably. The Austrian Association organizes a regular programme, publishes a year-book and newsletter, provides courses for Buddhist school teachers and organizes regular Buddhist religion education in state schools in various large towns in Austria (Ritter 1993, Hutter 2001: 99-110). In addition to the Austrian Association (www.buddhismus-austria.at), the independent quarterly journal *Ursache & Wirkung* ("Cause and Effect/Consequence") spreads news about Buddhist activities and publishes articles by Buddhist experts. According to the website, the journal has a circulation of 10,000 copies reaching some 30,000 people (www.ursache.at).

The successful state recognition of Buddhism in Austria served as a shining example for other national Buddhist unions in their aim to achieve a similar status and recognition. During the 1980s in Germany and other European countries, Buddhists felt that they were on the move. The official acknowledgement of Buddhism should secure a respected place and standing in the country and – importantly – enable Buddhist groups to set a clear boundary of not being considered a "sect" or "cult". As with Austria, in West Germany (merged in 1990 with East Germany), Buddhists strove for public recognition by the state. To achieve this, a new association with specific structures was established in parallel with the existing German Buddhist Union, an umbrella organization since 1955. Despite fulfilling this legal prerequisite and adopting a commonly accepted "Buddhist Confession" (a self-designation), state recognition was not granted. According to the state, the financial backing and the number of members were not sufficient to grant such status (Baumann 1993: 193-202, 252-258). Despite this set-back, Buddhists in Germany are proud to emphasize that they are the only Buddhists in the world to adopt a unified "Buddhist confession" acknowledged by a wide range of Buddhist traditions and schools. As such, Buddhists in Germany strongly emphasize unity within diversity. The German Buddhist Union is regarded by most Buddhist groups and organizations as *the* representative of Buddhism in Germany. The Union publishes an official journal, *Buddhismus Aktuell* ("Current Buddhism") with a circulation of 8,000 copies. The wide range of services of the Union, the journal, as well as the annual congress, have become professionalized during the past two decades. As such, Buddhism is going mainstream and has become a recognized, non-exotic religious option in Germany. Recent news is that the Union plans to apply again for state recognition, having assembled more members and financial resources (website: www.dharma.de).

In contrast to Austria and Germany, Buddhism in Switzerland is much less centrally organized. So far, intra-Buddhist activities have reached only a comparatively low degree. This decentralized structure strongly mirrors the federal and non-central set-up of Swiss cultural and political life. Stress on bottom-up and independent developments is believed to hinder the establishment of an acknowledged voice of Buddhism in Switzerland. Nevertheless, active Buddhists founded the Swiss Buddhist Union in 1976 and after two more or less dormant decades, a new generation of younger Buddhists resuscitated the Union in the early 1990s. The Union adopted, following the German Buddhist confession, the "Buddhist basic values", to provide a unified platform of contents of Buddhist ideas and teaching. With currently some thirty societies and centres as members, the Union organizes - as one of its main activities - a joint Vesak From an analytical perspective, the forming of the national unions and the definitions of common basics exemplify processes of the standardization of Buddhist teachings. In order to comply with legal requirements it was necessary to name and fix so-called core Buddhist contents. Despite the far ranging differences of Buddhist traditions in doctrinal terms and views, common denominators had to be agreed upon. The process to define such jointly-shared views brought together Buddhists of the different traditions in the country. It served as a catalyst for the flourishing of a Buddhist "ecumenical" cooperation (again, a self-designation) and to strengthen an intra-Buddhist dialogue. The adopted shared doctrines served to standardize confessional contents, a point most obviously reached with the "Buddhist Confession" agreed upon by German Buddhists of many different traditions. It should be mentioned, however, that quite a number of Buddhist groups and centres deliberately do not join a national umbrella organization due to such unified doctrinal standardization and fixation.

Interestingly, the diversity assembled in such national umbrella organizations consists primarily of convert Buddhist groups and centres. The absence of immigrant Buddhists and their organizations is apparent and only a very few institutions founded by immigrant Buddhists are members in any of the national unions. Despite the absolute number of migrant Buddhists, it is not they who represent Buddhism in public, but overwhelmingly convert Buddhists and their well-organized institutions, their eloquent speakers and their well-written publications.

So far, who represents Buddhism has not been an issue between immigrant and convert Buddhists in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. During the past decade, as Buddhism has stepped out into the public light and attracted the interest of the media, the question of who speaks for Buddhism has become a matter of dispute and debate among convert Buddhists. Not every teacher and every lineage or centre of convert Buddhists is held to be representative of Buddhism. Controversies and heated discussions were ignited with regard to the Danish teacher Ole Nydahl and his Diamond Way organization, or with regard to the exclusive stance of Geshe Kelsang Gyatso and his newly-established New Kadampa Tradition. Should they be accepted as members in a national umbrella organization in view of their attitudes towards other Buddhist schools or should they be banned? In Britain, for example, the Network of Buddhist Organizations faced a large scale exodus when the New Kadampa Tradition became a member. The disputes point both to the fragility of the alleged 'unity in diversity' and the internal quarrels which might be regarded as representative of Buddhism.

Prospects for the Twenty-First Century

The twentieth century saw a tremendous change of the presence and constitution of Buddhism in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Whereas in the early phase interest rested exclusively on the teachings of the Pali canon and Theravada Buddhism, since the 1950s the Buddhist scenery became more diverse and plural due to the large influx of Mahayana traditions and Tibetan Buddhist schools. Asian teachers and their Western followers founded numerous Tibetan Buddhist, Zen, vipassana, and non-affiliated groups and societies. Buddhism in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland is markedly diverse, plural, and heterogenic, composed of multitude Buddhist traditions and schools.

In public opinion, the positive image of Buddhism as non-missionary, tolerant, non-dogmatic and peace-loving – strikingly a nineteenth century projection and image – prevails. The above-mentioned disputes and controversies have rarely left the sub-cultural discourse of Buddhist scenery (mainly that of the convert strand). So far, public interest in Buddhist meditation and teachings has been too enthusiastic to focus on these and other internal tensions. Also, public criticism of leading Buddhists or organizations, such as the disparagement of the Soka Gakkai and the accusation of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhism in general as authoritarian and "magical", have not changed the overall positive public opinion to a critical or negative attitude. Numerically, Buddhists do not exceed 0.3% of the population in any of the three countries. However, Buddhism's religious impact and the general interest in its practices and teachings seem far beyond this minute figure. Nowadays, customers are able to buy a larger variety of Buddhist books in bookstores or purchase a Buddha figure in a furniture shop as a stylish accessory.

How can we explain this gulf between the large-scale positive image and its small numerical basis? An answer certainly has to take into account that among the convert Buddhist strand, the vast majority are well-educated, urban and economically well-off. Furthermore, many of these Buddhists are professionals - teachers, doctors, journalists, lawyers, publishers, employers, translators, artists and the like. Many of them are thus used to organizational work and are articulate, confident in public situations, and have a role which sets the tone. The multiplicatory function of these convert Buddhists compensates for the small numbers in a country. The professional basis of many convert Buddhists certainly points to good prospects of Buddhism in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. These chances are certainly added to by the media's interest and such high public figures as the Dalai Lama and the Vietnamese monk and poet Thich Nhat Hanh.

In addition to such supportive contextual factors, aspects of Buddhism's internal development point to prospering prospects too. During the last decade, the public appearance of Buddhism has become professionalized. Former low-budget journals have improved to become proficient magazines, various Buddhist publishers have come into existence, former in-group meetings have changed to polished, at times costly, public conventions. Also, an increasing number of Western Buddhists have taken on professional roles, i.e. they have become a priest, nun or monk, or a full-time lay teacher. A second generation of Western teachers is maturing, i.e. teachers who have been students of Western, not of Asian teachers (Wetzel 2002, Thiradhammo 2002). In addition, since the 1960s some of the many South Asian bhikkhus, Japanese *roshis* and Tibetan lamas having come to the West have taken up permanent residence in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The presence of Asian monastic instructors has had a catalytic effect on Buddhism's growth in these countries and generally in Europe. Finally, during the 1990s prominent US teachers such as Jack Kornfield and the late Prabhasa Dharma Roshi visited Germany, Austria and Switzerland for lecture tours and staging retreats. Other Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, Tibetan or South Asian monks, nuns and teachers tour the globe and have established transcontinental networks and organizations, also in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (Batchelor 1994, Baumann 2001, Prebish and Baumann 2002).

These positive prospects mainly refer to the strand of convert Buddhism and only partly apply to the strand of immigrant Buddhism. As has been observed in other Western geographic areas, Buddhism in Europe is made up of "two completely distinct lines of development" (Prebish 1993: 187). These two strands of Buddhism rarely meet and more often than not a disinterest and non-recognition prevails on both sides. Having passed the initial phase of establishing institutions to preserve the specific religious-cultural heritage, the immigrant communities now face new challenges as the second generation grows up. In the new, non-Asian context, Buddhism is no longer "caught", but needs to be taught. How and in which ways will the religious and cultural traditions be passed on to the children? What language will be used in Buddhist meetings and rituals, the language of the host country, in which the children are fluent, or the Asian language, of which many children have only a rudimentary knowledge? In which ways will traditional forms of worship and ritual have to change in order to comply more with the experiences and aspirations of a generation grown up in a socio-cultural context determined by time pressure, rationality and individualism? To what extent will folk or popular Buddhist practices as palm-reading or protective acts against malevolent spirits be questioned and declared inappropriate in a modern, secular context? In addition to many other issues and problems, the question of leadership is a peculiar one: up to now, most immigrant communities have recruited monks, nuns and priests from Asian countries. However, to a growing extent, Western-educated youth feel uncomfortable with the traditional views and attitudes held by many of these Asian teachers. Will new leadership arise among the second generation and how will it mediate between traditional and modernized forms and interpretations? Or will Western convert Buddhists be invited to replace the Asian personnel? The parallel presence of a highly organized and well-trained convert strand, to which second and third generation Buddhists might turn for instruction, seems to be a peculiarity among transplanted Asian religions in Western contexts. The mutual impact has rarely been studied to date for the German and Swiss and generally the European case. Also, as scholarly attention has been fixed on convert Buddhists, research on the strand of immigrant Buddhists in Germany and Switzerland has just started and is certainly in need of more focused studies. Even so, theoretical approaches such as diaspora studies or transnationalism have rarely been applied in order to better understand current developments and changes.

The prospects for both Buddhist strands seem to be good, despite internal tensions and the need for adaptive change and reformulation. Notwithstanding the rapidly increased interest in things Buddhist, Buddhism will certainly remain a minority tradition in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland during the twenty-first century. Buddhists hope, however, that being a Buddhist in these countries will be less regarded as a "trendy affair", romantic exoticism or clinging to Asian roots. Rather, Buddhism, in whatever shape, should become a non-sensational, "normal" and accepted part of the nation's landscape of religions.

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ESSAY 30

Buddhism in Scandinavia

Sumana Ratnayaka

Introduction

This essay attempts to elaborate on the history and present situation of Buddhists in Scandinavia that includes a brief account of the religious background and the practising Buddhists of various organizations in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

The Religious Background and History of Buddhism in Scandinavia

As far as the religious background is concerned the pre-Christian period of the Nordic countries lasted until about 1000 CE, the Roman Catholic period between 1000 and 1520 CE, the Protestant period between 1520 and 1970 CE, and the multi-religious period from around 1970 CE. After an influx of Sino-Vietnamese refugees to Scandinavia following the Vietnam War the Buddhist immigration from Sri Lanka, Thailand and other countries began to increase during the 1980s. However, the first Buddhists and those involved in Pali and Buddhist studies in Scandinavia were not immigrants; Buddhist group activities began during the 1950s.

At present there are departments of Indology, History of Religion and Anthropology, Theology, Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies at universities in all three countries, where Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan and other related languages as well as Buddhism are studied as at least a part of a discipline.

The spread of Buddhism in the West is explained by Jørn Borup (Department of the Study of Religion at the University of Aarhus, Denmark) in the words of a Tibetan Buddhist monk Padmasambhava of the eighth century:[1]

"When the fire ox drives on wheels and the iron bird flies everywhere, my teaching will come to the land of the white man."

The best-known Buddhist schools in Scandinavia, as in the West in general, are the Theravada, Tibetan, and Zen. There are a few Buddhist centres that have been converted from residential houses, cultural houses, old school buildings and the like, and purpose-built temples in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Almost every major organization attached to them publishes newsletters periodically. As is the case almost everywhere in the modern world the internet is used as a means of communication by these organizations and updated data available through their websites. Most of the monks, nuns and competent lay followers are often invited to schools, teachers' training colleges and universities to talk to students on Buddhism, since just like any other world religion, it is more or less taught under the discipline 'Religion'. A growing number of Scandinavians and other nationals are participating in meditation retreats planned by various Buddhist organizations.

King Chulalangkorn of Thailand visited Scandinavia in 1897 and donated the Pali canon as a set of thirty-nine volumes in Thai script to Uppsala University, Lund University and Oslo University. We have found the sets at all three universities. We do not know how the set in Lund was supposed to be in Oslo because it is marked *To Kristiania*. Following in the footsteps of King Chulalangkorn the ML Maniratne Bunnag Dhamma Society of Thailand donated the newly edited Romanized tripitaka edition under a special project to the main library of Uppsala University on September 13, 2005.

Buddhism in Educational Institutes

Teaching Buddhism in public schools is not obligatory in Denmark. From Grades 1 to 7 only Christianity is taught, but there has been some debate about this and some politicians would like to change these lessons from Christianity to religion in general. However, depending on the teachers' discretion, children get opportunities to absorb more about world religions so they are able to learn Buddhism, too.

In Norway and Sweden religion is compulsorily taught for Grade 9 and Advanced Level students. Under religion there are a few chapters, including one on Buddhism, for the classes after Grade 9. Depending on the interests of both teachers and students, however, the stress on some religions is more than the others.

Monks, nuns and other practising Buddhists are often invited to speak at schools and they notice that what has been taught in terms of Buddhism at some of the schools is outdated, largely stemming from old European (Christian) studies. As far as university studies are concerned the departments like religious studies, theology, Indology etc. in the universities of Copenhagen, Aarhus, Odense and Roskilde in Denmark; Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim in Norway; and Uppsala, Stockholm, Gothenburg, Lund in Sweden, teach courses including Buddhism to some extent. Buddhism in educational institutes in Scandinavia is a subject by itself.

Buddhism in Denmark

It is estimated that Buddhists in Denmark today number around 20,000. Figures are not exact because the identity of Buddhists depends on definitions and seriousness of individual practice. In certain countries it is easier to categorize Buddhists because people belong clearly to one category of religion or another. The Buddhists in Denmark – like they are in the other two Scandinavian countries - include Vietnamese, Thai, Burmese, Sri Lankan immigrants and local Buddhists. The number of Danish Buddhists is estimated between 4,000-5,000 today. As far as Buddhist traditions are concerned the Buddhists in Denmark represent the Theravada (36%), the Mahayana (48%) and the Vajrayana (16%).[2] Eighty per cent of these are estimated to be immigrants. However, the interest in Buddhism in Denmark was first kindled by the Danish scholars and their works on philological studies in the nineteenth century.

History

The year 1855 is the most memorable in the history of Pali studies in Denmark with the publication of Fausbøll's "Dhammapada" as the first scientific edition of a Pali text in Europe. Danish scholars' involvement in Pali studies goes as far back as 1821 when RK Rask visited Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) and studied Pali and Sinhalese and took a rich collection of Pali manuscripts back to Denmark. Twenty years later, N L Westergaard, with the help of the German Professor Fa. Spiegel, produced the well-known "Cataloqus". He also worked on the Mahavamsa and Buddhist history. V Trenckner is the other Pali scholar who began *A Critical Pali Dictionary* (CPD), which was revised, continued and edited by Dines Andersen, Helmer Smith, Charlotte Hersa, Ole Holten Pind and other scholars. The funding from the Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai, which began in 1991, came to an end in 1998 and caused the termination of employment of both Charlotte Hersaa in July 1998 and Ole Holten Pind in April 2000. They worked for the dictionary from April 1980 and August 1986 respectively. The project for the CPD was supported by the Royal Danish Academy from its beginning in 1925 until January 2000 and then transferred to the Asian Institute of the University of Copenhagen.[3] Recently the dictionary was developed nearly to the end of volume three by completing the letter "ka", and made available through the internet by the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies (ToRS) at the University of Copenhagen.[4] It is planned, according to the present editor, to complete volume three of the CPD by the year 2015 by reaching the end of the letter "k".

The theoretical aspect of Buddhism developed along these lines. However, putting theory into practice was felt essential as the next phase in Denmark from as early as the 1960s. Adventurers then went to Asia in search of the Eastern philosophies. It seems that they focused on "textual Buddhism" from mainly the Theravada tradition and "practice Buddhism" from further East, Zen, and later from Tibet. However, there had been attempts to establish a Buddhist society in Denmark even earlier. For instance, Dr Christian F Melbye, a psychiatrist, who learned about Buddhism from books from England, Germany and France, and practised Buddhism, established the first Buddhist Society in Denmark in 1921. He managed to run this society until 1950 but then dissolved it. As Borup points out, Melbye had been interested in the philosophy and psychology of religion for many years and was familiar with contemporary studies on (Theravada) Buddhism. He shared with his Buddhist friends his interpretation of Buddhism and his way of being a Buddhist:

> Buddhism on Danish soil well, much could stir one's hope of it having good prospects. But as we see the moorland covered by heather in full bloom, we may also see Buddha's exalted thoughts spreading amongst a large number of people in the midst of our dry Danish spiritual soil (tr. Borup 2007, 38).[5]

This shows that the origin of Buddhism in Denmark, just like in the other Scandinavian countries, was not from immigrants, although they added a new chapter to the growth of Buddhism in this region. Among them we find Vietnamese and Thai are the majority, and the Sri Lankans, Burmese and Chinese, the minority.

Vietnamese Buddhists

The influx of Vietnamese refugees after the end of Vietnamese war that started in the late 1970s and early 1980s added another chapter to the Buddhist history of Denmark. From this period onward Chinese and Sri Lankans also arrived, mostly as refugees. In the case of the Vietnamese and Chinese about two-thirds of them are considered Buddhists. Presently there are few Vietnamese temples in Denmark representing the Vietnamese Mahayana tradition, of which Linh Thuu temple in Copenhagen represents the Pureland School. Bhikshuni Thich Nu Nhu Hieu is the chief nun there. The Ven. Thich Quang Binh is the chief monk of the Lieu Quan temple in Valby, the Ven. Thich Minh Tanh chief monk of the Quang Huong temple in Mundelstrup and the Ven. Thich Hanh Bao chief monk of the Van Hanh temple in Odense. The Nørresundby Vietnamese Buddhist Association runs the An Lac temple in Nørresundby, and the Hjørring Vietnamese Buddhist Association runs the Giac Hai temple in Hjørring. They and some other Vietnamese associations from different towns in Denmark, as well as the Vietnamese cultural house in Aalborg, are affiliated to the Vietnamese Buddhism Union in Denmark.

Thai Buddhists

Thai Buddhists in Denmark started growing in number more than other ethnic Buddhists mainly because Thai women migrated to Denmark having married Danish men who eventually become followers of Thai culture and Buddhism. The other important but distant cause for this increase may be that Thai people like to follow in the footsteps of King Chulalangkorn, who paid visits to Scandinavia in the late 1890s with sets of the Pali canon (thirty-nine volumes), donating them to the most well-known universities (see below). In the case of Thai immigrants, 90-95% of them are Buddhists. The Thai population in Denmark is estimated to be 7,700 at present.

There are three Thai temples in Denmark today: Wat Thai Denmark Brahmavihara Buddhist Monastery in Stenløse; Watpa Copenhagen in Dragør; and Wat Buddha Denmark in Juelsminde, from the Mahanikaya, Dhammayuttika, and Dhammakaya schools respectively. They organize and conduct ceremonies, cultural events, and meditation programmes in the manner used in Thailand, but with slight alternatives sometimes to suit the new premises. It is noteworthy that Thai marriage ceremonies take place with the blessings of the monks at temples. Monks are invited by families and offered lunch and gifts like robes and financial donations on special family days such as birthdays, memorial days of departed relatives, and the like.

Sri Lankan Buddhists

About 900 of the 1,200 Sinhalese of the 10,300 Sri Lankans who live in Denmark are Buddhists.[6] The majority of the Sri Lankans are Tamil who are either Hindu or Christian.[7] The Copenhagen Buddhist Vihara was established a few years ago in a one-room flat in a suburb of Copenhagen. Between 100 and 200 Sri Lankan Buddhist families visit it on occasions when each family takes its turn to offer alms to the monks. One or two Sri Lankan monks have been staying at the vihara with the recommendation of its patron, the Ven. Kirindigalle Dhammaratana Nayakathera, the chief monk of Stockholm Buddhist Vihara. As with the Thai Buddhist tradition, the resident monks are invited mostly on weekends to individual families and offered food and other basic necessities. Some families offer financial donations. The monks chant a few selected discourses for blessing the families and houses, give Dhamma talks, and transfer merit to departed relatives.

Theravada Buddhism in Scandinavia is primarily represented by Thais, Burmese and Sri Lankans. The few Vipassana groups in Scandinavia belong to the Theravada school of Buddhism but the practitioners are primarily ethnic Danish, Norwegian or Swedish.

Vipassana Meditation

Vipassana meditation in Denmark is mainly connected with the method used by SN Goeka. To learn Vipassana meditation, a person is supposed to develop his/her own experience during a residential ten-day course. The course dates are advertised in a schedule of their website www.dk.dhamma.org so that beginners are able to find a convenient course to learn the requirements and other details. The Vipassana courses conducted following this method function in the other centres of the world based on similar principles and procedures. (See below the Dhamma Sobhana in Sweden for more details.)

Tibetan Buddhists

The Karma Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism was founded in Denmark in the 1950s. Mr Erik Meier Carlsen was among those who went to Asia in search of philosophies and even tried various types of drugs. He was a journalist and political commentator who practiced under the Tibetan dzog. Chen -tradition.

Hannah Nydahl (who died in 2007) and Ole Nydahl have contributed immensely to the development of the Karma Kagyu lineage in Denmark. They are well-known as Danish llamas (teachers). Most Danish Buddhists belong to the society which Hannah and Ole established in the late 1960s. Hanna and Ole Nydahl opened their Copenhagen Buddhist Centre[8] in 1972. Ole is its director and the seventeenth Karmapa Thaye Dorje is the spiritual director. When the Tibetan llamas visited Denmark and the neighbouring countries Hanna worked as their translator (from Tibetan into Danish, English, or German). It is estimated that there are more than 4,000 Danes who follow the Tibetan school of Buddhism. The Llama Ole Nydahl is the director of ten organizations of the "Diamond Way" and the rest within the Karma Kadyu lineage in different parts of Denmark.

The Karma Kagyu lineage holder, Sharmar Rinpoche, visited the Dharma centre in the northern part of Denmark and performed the consecration ceremony of the enlightenment stupa in Jutland on August 24, 2004. The Dharma Centre within the Karma Kagyu is in Gedsted located on an ecological farm. The centre is managed by

Eva and Claus Hermansen. Claus took refuge in 1972 guided by his teacher, the sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa. Since 1986, Claus has been teaching Buddhism in the centre as well as in several other places around the world. The schedule of the Dharma centre includes regular meditation and courses during weekends. The centre is open to everyone.

The Copenhagen Meditation Centre follows the New Kadampa tradition[9], its spiritual teacher is Geshe Kelsang Gyatso and the teacher is the Ven. Gen Lodro.

The Center For Conscious Living And Dying in Copenhagen, Tong-nyi Nying-je Ling in Copenhagen, and Lakha House[10] in Søborg, represent the Gelugpa lineage to which the HE the Dalai Lama belongs.

Urgyen Ling[11] in Grenå and Rangjung Yeshe Gomdé in Knebel[12], Tornbjerggaard in Esby, and Kobenhavn Shambhala Group[13] in Copenhagen represent or related to the Nyingmapa lineage which is closely related to the Karma Kagyu.

The Tarab Institute

The Tarab Institute was founded by Tarab Tulku Rinpoche XI (1934-2004), a highly educated Tibetan llama with a Lharampa Geshe degree from Tibet. Rinpoche came to the West in the 1960s, and his work culminated in "Unity in Duality", which was highly estimated by HH the Dalai Lama, who officially proclaimed that Rinpoche's work was very important in this period of hsitory. His works are based on the Sutras and the Tantras. According to the website of the institute, Tarab Rinpoche has entrusted his teachings and given the responsibility to Lene Handberg, Tarab Tulku Rinpoche's assistant for 15 years. She has been teaching at the Unity in Duality Education for the past ten years. Tarab Tulku Rinpoche founded the first Tarab Institute in Denmark in 1991. Later Rinpoche also founded institutes in Brussels, Tartu, Helsinki, Paris, Hamburg/Munich, Stockholm, and London. In 2006 the Tarab Institute International was founded as an umbrella organization for the Tarab Institute and Tarab Ling.[14]

Tendai Denmark

Today, a few Theravada temples, and Tibetan and Zen groups, have an organization, Buddhist Forum, at which they have meetings and discussions. They also publish a magazine.

Zen Buddhists

Copenhagen Sangha and Joy of Mindfulness, affiliated to the Community of Mindful Living, is led by the Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh in France and the Order of Interbeing as given in the updated (March 23, 2011) International Sangha Directory of the journal, *Mindfulness Bell*.[15] Some Zen Buddhists have already participated in retreats at the Plum Village in the south of France and in other towns of the country. They, along with others from neighbouring areas, usually have their regular meditation sessions at their own residences. Helsinge Sangha organized by Jørgen Hannibal and the Community of Here and Now in Lundby are, for instance, of this nature. (See more details with reference to the Dharma Group in Norway below.)

The Danish Zen Center in Herfoelge follows the Korean Kwan Um School of Zen. The founder of the centre is Zen Master Seung Sah.[16]

Those following the Japanese Zen traditions include, for instance, One Drop Zendo in Copenhagen, and Zen Buddhistisk Forening in Valby. Tim Pallis attached to Zen Buddhist Association in Valby, is one of the first Danes to go abroad to study in the Daitoku temple in Kyoto, Japan as early as in 1969. His first teacher was Sohaku Kobori.

Skandinavisk Zen Center[17] has members all over Denmark. Their main centre is the Egely monastery[18], opened on June 1, 2007 in Bornholm. The practice is based on Rinzai Zen. In addition to the teachings and sitting sessions (*zazen*) at the monastery they have regular meditation sessions in Copenhagen and Århus as well. Their main teacher is Denko John Mortensen Roshi who first became interested in Zen in the late sixties and was ordained as a Rinzai Zen Buddhist monk on July 4, 1980. He received the Dharma transmission (*Inka*) from Eido Roshi in 2002.

Sōka Gakkai

The Sōka Gakkai Denmark is the other main school of Japanese origin. This group was established in 1983 and it is estimated that there are about 1,000 members in Denmark. They have their meetings and activities in the main centre in Copenhagen (the Nordic Culture Centre). They also have fifty-four local groups in six main regions.

Tendai

Tendai in Denmark[19] is organized following the Karuna Tendai Dharma Centre in the USA. This school of Buddhism developed in China and Japan historically but came to Europe mostly through the USA. The main focus of this Buddhist organization is to study and practice the Buddha's teaching, which is down-to-earth and practical following the Tendai methods with the focus on the lotus sutra. Ekayana Sangha in Randers, Lotus Sangha in Slagslunde, Tendai in Copenhagen, Tendai in Fyn, and Tendai in Aalborg have their meditation sessions at least once a week. They also organize retreats and talks. Their teachers are Tarabini Shonin and Shomon Pia Trans.

Buddhism in Norway[20]

It is estimated that there are about 28,000 Buddhists in Norway. The members of different Buddhist schools have to be counted to estimate how many they are. In the case of Vietnamese Buddhists, for example, some might not be as serious practitioners as others, but all are considered to be Buddhists in a wide sense according to their traditional culture and value system. The same goes with the Chinese in Norway as well. There are about 8,000 from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore or Malaysia. Among them are persons who are not that strict about being or not being Buddhists. This is, again, a traditional matter. Looking at China before the communist revolution people would probably call themselves Buddhists or followers of Buddhism but afterwards they were not that serious about being or not being Buddhists. However, they all worship the Buddha from time to time at least for obtaining some blessings. The divisions between the folk religion, Taoism, or Confucianism would not be very clear to ordinary persons.

Buddhists from Thailand

In the 1990s there were only a few thousand Thais living in Norway, but in 2011 they number 12,000. One reason for this increase is because many Thai women come to Norway having married Norwegians. Eventually Buddhist monks are invited. In this way Thai Buddhists in Norway, just like in other European countries, are diversifying and increasing. Thai monks in Norway represent different Nikayas in Thailand: the Maha Nikaya, the Dhammayuttika Nikaya and the Dhammakaya.

Thai Temples and Monks

The main Thai association has more than 4,000 members who have been in Norway since the beginning of the1990s. They built a new temple with standard modern facilities spending more than fifteen million Norwegian crowns. Its inauguration on July 7, 2007, happened to be the 100th anniversary of King Chulalangkorn's visit to Norway. This being a special day for Thailand the inauguration of the temple was attended by the princess, former wife of the Crown Prince of Thailand and a large group of participants including a big group of monks from Thailand. The monks of this temple are connected to the Mahanikaya and especially to Wat Saket in Bangkok, hence the temple was named after the chief monk of Wat Saket, the Ven. Buddhajan as Wat Sala Buddhajan. This is the largest purpose-built Thai temple in Norway. Then there are other places converted to be Thai temples representing the other nikayas in Thailand, too. Over the last five years Thai Buddhism has become diversified in Norway. Of course, from the view point of the Wat Thai (Thai Temple) in Norway, this diversification is seen as divisions within the Thai Buddhist community on the one hand. On the other hand it may be seen as a natural development as a consequence of Thai Buddhism being centralized and organized according to the orders of the king and later the government for the last century. So, contrary to the traditional Buddhist nikayas, Wat Dhammakaya became established in Thailand. For the last four to five years they have been active in Norway as another Thai Buddhist group. As in a number of other countries they bought an already existing religious facility, a Christian chapel in Norway in a small town called Holmostrand, near Oslo, and converted it to their temple. They are quite active and there are local initiatives in their group from different towns in Norway. There are three more Thai temples in Norway achieved by converting residential houses into temples; one in Trondheim, the second in Stavanger and the third in Moss. The monks staying in these three temples are from the Dhammayuttika Nikaya. In all these establishments there is a certain pattern in that lay followers can only establish an association but need monks to establish a temple. In the case of monks, too, they do not come as free individuals but as a part of a kind of network of monks with a leadership. Another place with a monk from the Mahanikaya is in the northern town of Tromso. He is settled independently there, as are the monks in Stavanger.

The Forest Dwelling Tradition of Thailand in Norway

This is still another development in progress. This is a Norwegian initiative with the local funding for setting up a forest monastery related to the monks from Australia, especially Ajahn Bram who is a disciple of Ajahn Cha.

Thai Women Buddhist Association

A small but active Theravada association called the Buddha Dhamma Association began about two years ago organized by Thai women in Norway, but presently has more Norwegian members. They do not have any particular connection to a particular Theravada branch and they invite monks, for instance, from the Dhammakaya, or Western monks attached to the Theravada tradition, for talks and other religious activities.

Vietnamese Buddhists

There are about 20,000 Vietnamese people in Norway at present. However, about 16,000 of them are Buddhists and the rest are mainly Roman Catholics. The first Vietnamese came to Norway as refugees during the late 1970s after the fall of Saigon in the spring of 1975 when the North Vietnamese army conquered South Vietnam. In 1980 Norwegian Buddhists started getting in touch with them. Tibetan and Zen Buddhist associations were already active in Norway at that time. The Vietnamese impart a Vietnamese flavour to Mahayana Buddhism arriving from China. It was in 1982 that all Norwegian Buddhist groups celebrated Vesak for the first time publicly. In autumn 1982 the Vietnamese Buddhist Association was established and was connected to the Vietnamese association in France. This association is connected with Pure Land Buddhism practised in Hwei, the old imperial capital in Vietnam where their emperor resided until 1946. The monastic tradition connected to Hwei had historical relationships with China because some of them had come to Vietnam as refugees after the fall of the Ming Dynasty in China. So the Vietnamese association in Norway had a certain background related to this history having ritualistic, traditional, and imperialistic features. About 1986 two Vietnamese monks who had been in refugee camps in Asia came to Norway and joined this association. Eventually as many as twenty young people who grew up in Norway joined the association. Of course, some of them have already gone abroad or disrobed. Some of them went to other places and managed to establish Vietnamese temples. This is how the Vietnamese temples in Denmark and Sweden originated.

Vietnamese Temples in Norway

At first there was only one temple near Oslo, a small house that had been converted. After a few years the practitioners managed to get their own temple built just outside Oslo following the Vietnamese temple architecture. It is always crowded with Vietnamese monks, nuns and other practitioners.

In late 1980s there was a small Vietnamese temple in Trondheim. They had individual associations in Bergen, Stavanger and Moss. The Buddhist Federation of Norway managed to bring all these under the Vietnamese Buddhist Association and merge into the Buddhist Federation. Afterwards the groups in Bergen and Stavanger remained with the Vietnamese Buddhist Association. But the group in Trondheim had a difference and became organized as an independent entity, although they have worked closely with the Buddhist Federation of Norway. They have built a large and beautiful Vietnamese temple there already, although t has yet to be officially inaugurated. This is the second purpose-built Vietnamese Buddhist temple in Norway, which is also the northernmost purpose-built Buddhist temple in the world. One of the monks from the temple had a disagreement, set up an association in Moss, and established a temple there by converting an extensive residential house into a temple. Altogether, then, there are five Vietnamese Buddhist temples in Norway now.

the Vietnamese Temple in Norway

In addition to the temples, the Vietnamese Association has purchased a building near the Oslo Airport and is developing it to run courses on Vietnamese culture and traditional practices for young people. Until now there has been an annual course for 200-250 young people during the Christmas holidays, renting an entire school for this purpose and making the students stay there during the course.

Burmese Buddhists

There are two Burmese monks who belong to the Burmese Buddhist Association which is again a part of the Buddhist Federation in Norway. They have more than 400 members in their association, although the actual number of Burmese Buddhists is twice as much as list of members. There are other Burmese monks, at least two of them, staying in Norway informally. However, the Burmese have been in Norway for about five years by now. Most of them were welcomed in Norway as refugees from the camps in Thailand. According to the latest statistics there are around 4,000 Burmese in Norway.

Sri Lankan Buddhists

Sri Lankan Buddhists began their meetings and celebrations in the early 1980s in low profile. When the Stockholm Buddhist Vihara was established in 1985

Sri Lankan Buddhist Vihara near Oslo

(the first such for all Nordic countries) they developed personal contacts with the vihara and invited monks for special cultural events. They have been more organized since 1993 with the establishment of the Tisarana Buddhist Association, making the incumbent monk of the Stockholm Buddhist Vihara its spiritual patron. This association is again a part of the Buddhist Federation of Norway. Recently they purchased a residential house and converted it to a Buddhist temple just outside Oslo. The inauguration of it took place on February, 19, 2011, in the presence of the chief incumbent of the Stockholm Buddhist Vihara, several other Buddhist monks from the Vietnamese and Thai temples, as well as the newly invited chief resident monk, the Ven. Maratugoda Maniratana. Other distinguished guests such as the Ambassador for Sri Lanka, the President of the Buddhist Federation of Norway, and the devotees and friends of the Oslo Buddhist Vihara, participated in the inauguration.

Chinese Buddhists

There are Chinese Buddhists from Taiwan: the Fo Kuang Shan, the Buddha's Light International, is just another part of the Buddhist Federation, situated in Oslo, and run by the nuns from other branches of Fo Kuang Shan mostly from Stockholm and sometimes Switzerland and England. They are very well organized and have developed positive co-operation between their centres.

Western Buddhists

Zen Buddhists

All those referred to above are traditional Buddhists living in Norway, but there are Western Buddhists, too. As the booklet, *Buddhism in Norway* states, the first Buddhist group established in the country was the Zen Buddhist group based on a Norwegian initiative in 1972. It was a small group to begin with but grew steadily. However, when it faced difficulties in continuing only as 'home grown Zen' this centre was affiliated with the centenarian Japanese Zen master, Jeoshi Zusuki Roshe living in California. One of his disciples from Switzerland had contacts with the Zen centre in Norway as a teacher until he passed away recently in his 80s. Now they have a Zen teacher visits from the United States every year. They also have a local Zen teacher (originally American) from the community. This group and the Tibetan group are the two founders of the Buddhist Federation of Norway.

Vietnamese Buddhists in front of their temple in Oslo

Tibetan Buddhists

In 1974, a well known Tibetan lama, the sixteenth Karmapa of Tibetan Buddhism, travelled to a number of countries and visited Norway, too. His black crown ceremony was conducted in a museum in Oslo. Some other lamas and Olle Nydahl from Denmark, who is well-known for practising and teaching this school of Buddhism, participated in this ceremony. In 1975, a community of young people practising exercises and meditation affiliated to this school of Buddhism became organized just outside Oslo. They established an association and in 1977 the Lama Talu came to Norway. Although he had not been exposed to a Western culture or language he managed to move with the youngsters and other practitioners with his spiritual orientation obtained in Tibet and India. He lived in Norway until he passed away in 1993. He did not know much Norwegian but he had a strong extravert personality and body language with which he managed to communicate his message. After his doctor told him that had cancer and would live only for a few months he went back to Tibet with money saved from his pension given by the Norwegian government to rebuild his own monastery which had been destroyed during the time of the cultural revolution as well as set up an educational institute for young monks. His friends and brother monks insisted that he should remain in

Tibet because he was too weak to travel. However, he told them he must return to Norway where he should die. He passed away in a hospital in Norway a fortnight after his return. Although he was weak physically his mind was very sharp and clear enough to guide people until he passed away. The Lama Gnavang from Sweden was with him throughout his last days.

The Tibetan Association

The Tibetan association, Kamu Tasha Ling, has grown to become the most important group among Western Buddhists, with the registered members numbering around 700. This is far greater than the other Buddhist associations of Westerners. This association bought its property where the first temple community was established in 1976. In 2005, a stupa was built, eleven metres in height. This is an interesting piece of Buddhist architecture produced in Norway according to traditional design and structure. Now (2011) a new temple is in the process of being built. It is planned to provide more rooms and other facilities attached to the temple for more serious practitioners. Karma Shedupling that belongs to this association is a forest area of about thirty-eight acres. It has fifteen cabins and other facilities for retreats and study courses. In addition, there is a centre in the down town area of Oslo where various Buddhist meditation programmes and study courses on Buddhism are conducted on most days of the week.

HH the Dalai Lama's Impact on the Progress of Buddhism in Norway

The school of Tibetan Buddhism that the Tibetan Association in Norway belongs to is Karma Kaju, which lays emphasis on meditation practices. HH the Dalai Lama is associated with another school of Buddhism which is the Gelukpa school that focuses on the intellectual aspects of Buddhism such as the study of Buddhist philosophy. The Nyimma school is very close to the Karma Kaju school. The main teacher of the Tibetan centre in Norway is a nun connected to both Kaju and Nyimma schools. The other school of Tibetan Buddhism, Shakya is not that dispersed. The Gelukpa school has never been established in Norway although HH the Dalai Lama has visited Norway many times. However, the members of the Tibetan Association were involved in organizing his visits to Norway. His visit to Norway having been awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1988 was a very special event that made a great impact on promoting Buddhism in Norway as well as other countries.

The Dharma Group, the Late Svein Myreng, and Thich Nhat Hanh's Lineage

In early 1980s there was a Theravada Buddhist association called Theravada School, established in Norway by Kåre Lie, a Buddhist scholar and personal practitioner who translated some Pali texts into Norwegian. The late Mr Nils Wandel was also involved in this association as he was interested in the Theravada practices. After a few years Kåre Lie was more involved in scholarly works like editing and translating Pali texts and writing Buddhist texts than being involved in the association.

At that time Svein Myreng was a member of the Zen centre in Norway. He had some objections to spiritual teachers' drinking sake or other kinds of alcohol. He wanted a more moral approach of practice. During that time he discovered the ethically-minded Thich Nhat Hanh in France. Svein Myreng noticed the harmonious elements of Thich Nhat Hanh's teaching and those of the Theravada teachings. So, Svein Myreng took over the Theravada association and merged it with the Thich Nhat Hanh's way of teaching Buddhism. As a result the Dharma Group in Norway came into existence. The Buddhist Federation approved of this development of the association. After Svein Myreng's passing away its growth slowed. However, it has about one hundred members registered in the Buddhist Federation. They organize retreats and other Dharma activities in Norway a few times a year and invite Buddhist teachers to lead them.

Tri Ratna Buddhist Community

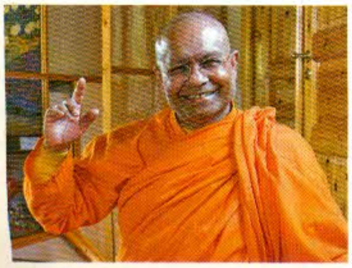
The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order appeared around 2000 and has about fifty registered members. The name of this school has already been changed to Tri Ratna Buddhist Community in England and elsewhere because it has more members in India than in the West. In Norway, too, they changed the name to Tri Ratna Buddhist Skelskap.

The Buddhist Federation of Norway

The Buddhist Federation has members who are officially registered as Buddhists without wanting to be members of any other particular Buddhist organization or tradition. In this case the financial support that government provides for each member goes to the Buddhist Federation. The other Buddhists of different organizations are also registered with the Buddhist Federation. Then the government support goes through the Buddhist Federation to each organization according to the number of members they have. The funds the Buddhist Federation accumulates are used for disseminating Buddhism in various ways. At present the Buddhist Federation has about one million

Norwegian crowns for this purpose. According to Norwegian law, if a person joins the Buddhist Federation they are entitled to fill in a special form with the president's signature. About nine million crowns come in from the government to the Buddhist community which need proper accounting both in the central office and branch offices of each association.

The President ("Forstande") of the Buddhist Federation is not elected but appointed by the government. The term forstande refers to the person appointed by the board and approved by the county governor to be responsible for all matters with legal implications. This person represents the particular religious community, being responsible externally in relation to the government and other religions. So this position does not function like being a president of an ordinary association in which there are other office bearers of a committee elected by the members. Mr Egil Lothe has held his position as the President of the Buddhist Federation of Norway since 1987. When the work-load increased the Buddhist Federation needed to establish another paid position of coordinator. To begin with only 50 per cent of work was assigned to this position in 2003: now it has increased to 75 per cent. The coordinator is responsible for both office and project work. For instance, the former involves work regarding tax deductable donations. If a person donates 1,000 crowns to a particular Buddhist association in Norway he or she can send it to this central account indicating the particulars. Then the Buddhist Federation sends the amount to the relevant Buddhist vihara, centre or association and the donor will receive 280 crowns (i.e. 80 per cent of the donation) from the tax office. This encourages people to donate. When an individual association purchases something with the value added tax (VAT) they receive a percentage refund. The Buddhist Federation is involved in projects like publishing books, such as the extensive *Buddha's Budskap: Translations from Pali into Norwegian*. One volume was completed and launched during the Vesak celebrations in 2010 in the presence of several ambassadors of Asian countries, the mayor of Oslo and a gathering of Buddhists representing various Buddhist traditions. Additionally, the Buddhist Federation participates in international Buddhist conferences together with representatives of different Buddhist associations, and extends co-operation in organizing Buddhist conferences.


Bhante Dhammarathana

Stockholm Buddhist Vihara

Buddhism in Sweden

History

The first known professed Buddhist in Sweden was the socialist agitator Katarina 'Kata' Dalström (1858-1923) well known in Swedish political history. She became a Buddhist towards the end of her life.[21]

Helgö Buddha Image

A small bronze Buddha image, probably made in India, was found in 1956 at an archaeological site in Helgö close to Stockholm, where it had been since the beginning of the Viking age. It is difficult to be absolutely precise about the date of this Buddha image due to the lack of scientific excavations in the Swat Valley and the parallels of this Buddha image. According to scholars, this image was made in the Swat Valley in the late Gandharan/early Gupta period, before the Karkotaka dynasty (650-1100 BCE) and the sixth century. Barrett and von Schroeder now agree on a sixth-century date, having revised their earlier opinions (Barrett 1962; von Schroeder 1981). Now it belongs to the Swedish Museum of National Antiquities (Historiska Museet) in Stockholm.

Evidence of the Interest in Buddhism from Swedish Literary Works

Buddhist traces are to be found in Swedish literature. In the 1880s, Viktor Rydberg (1828-1895, a member of the Swedish Academy and one of the most well-known writers in Sweden) wrote a preface to the Swedish translation by Victor Pfeiff of Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia*. August Strindberg (1849-1912), the poet Karin Boye (1900-1941), and Harry Martinson (1904-1978) are some of the well-known Swedish writers who knew and respected Buddhism.

Sweden has a proud record of Buddhist studies. The outstanding worker in this field was Helmer Smith. He worked in Denmark and England as well and made a distinct contribution to Sinhalese Language and literature too.[22]

Practising Buddhists from the 1950s

The Ven. Tao Wei (Marcel Sirander) and Ven. Bhikkuni Amita Nisatta (Ingrid Wagner) were active as Buddhist practitioners in 1950s in Sweden. The Ven. Tao Wei was originally from France and began his Buddhist studies in his native town, Nice. He left France for China and was ordained at the Tse Chia Chan monastery in 1933. After five years of study and practice at the monastery he returned to Europe and about ten years later moved to Sweden where he lived until he passed away in 1984. While in Sweden he became a lay practitioner and worked at the University of Gothenburg. The Swedish Buddhist Society he formed eventually became the regional centre of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. In 1975 he went back to China and then to Hong Kong where he received the Bhikshu ordination again. When he returned to Sweden afterwards he formed the Lotus Buddhist Order which had members from several countries like France, England, Israel, and Sweden.

In 1975 the Rev. Tao Wei returned to China - to Hong Kong - where he again received the Bhikshu ordination. Back in Sweden he formed The Lotus Buddhist order, following the tradition of The Lotus Buddhist association in Hong Kong. This Order had members in Sweden, England, Israel and France.

The next important contributor to the promotion of Buddhism in Sweden was Sister Amita Nisatta (Ingrid Wagner). She and her husband, Karl-Henrik, went to India in 1953 to study art and Buddhism[23]. After two years Mrs Wagner received ordination in Nepal and lived as an anagarika under the name Sister Amita Nisatta. Then she returned to Sweden and became involved in teaching Buddhism. After a year she was invited to study and practise in Burma and Anagarika Sugata took over her work in Stockholm. When Sister Amita returned from Burma Anagarika Sugata went to Norway and spread the teaching there. Sister Amita formed the Buddhist society, Buddhismens Vänner (The Friends of Buddhism), and she gave regular lectures on Buddhism at the Chinese Temple room of the Ethnographic Museum, Stockholm.

Number of Buddhists in Sweden Today

The number of Buddhists in Sweden is difficult to know exactly as is the case elsewhere, but it is estimated that there are about 35,000 Buddhists in Sweden. Both SBS, and Katarina Plank who has done research on Buddhism in Sweden do not have more criteria than roughly counting the Western Buddhists (converts) and the number immigrants from Asian Buddhist cultures found in Asian Buddhist organizations in Sweden. The immigrants from Asian Buddhist cultures number at least 60,000, but it is difficult to know whether they are practising Buddhists, converts to Christianity or secular as the Swedish state does not register the inhabitant's religion.

Sri Lankan Buddhists

Stockholm Buddhist Vihara[24], the first Sri Lankan Buddhist Vihara in Scandinavia, was established with the arrival of Bhante Sumanaratana (the present writer) in Sweden at the invitation of Sri Lanka-Sweden Buddhist Association on April 26, 1985. The vihara was located for its first year at Nybrogatan 75 - two rooms offered from Mr Ian Beck's office premises. Until it moved to permanently established premises in Jakobsberg in 1995 the vihara had to move to nine different areas in Stockholm and Uppsala. Its membership has grown from sixty to around 1,500 in number. The Ven. Kirindigalle Dhammaratana Nayakathera has been its chief incumbent since 1995. The vihara is open for all those interested in practising ethical, cognitive and spiritual values of Buddhism, using the library or just visiting. School children from different areas in Sweden pay visits to the vihara quite often. The monks are invited to visit their schools so that the can contribute to their religious education.

The Tapovanarama Vihara in Alby is the other Sri Lankan temple, which located at an apartment. The Ven. Watapana Pannaratana is the chief monk.

The Dhammadeepa Vihara outside Stockholm that Ven. Maratugoda Maniratana ran for a few years was closed in February 2011 because he moved to the Oslo Buddhist Vihara with the recommendation of the Ven. Kirindigalle Dhammaratana Nayakathera of Stockholm Buddhist Vihara and the invitation of the Tisarana Buddhist Society in Norway.

Thai Buddhists

Since the early 1980s both Thai and Sri Lankan Buddhists have talkied about the need for a temple for their religious practices and cultural activities. As a result the Buddharama Temple[25] was established with the arrival of the Ven. Jutindharo Thera (Phra Maha Chanong Chuttintharo (Luang-ta), from Wat Saket, Bangkok, in 1984. First it was established in an apartment in Alby outside Stockholm for about a year. Then the Thai Buddhist Association in Sweden and other devotees managed to purchase land in Värmdö, 37km east of Stockholm and built the temple, Wat Buddharama[26], in the traditional Thai style. It was inaugurated on June 4, 1988. The present chief monk of the Buddha Rama Temple is Phra Khru Sutaputthitut (Phramahaboonthin Panyatacho). Buddhist cultural events are organized a few times a year in addition to daily alms-giving and blessing ceremonies at the homes of Thai families or at the temple. One additional project that the Thai Buddhist

Association in Sweden got involved was to build the biggest Thai temple in Europe in Fredrika[27], in the far north of Sweden, a central location for northern Finland, Norway and Sweden. In 2007, they completed the erection of the standing Buddha statue.

In addition to the two above-mentioned temples there are seven more Thai Buddhist temples at present in Sweden: Wat Sanghabaramee[28] at Trollenäs, Eslöv; Wat Santinivas[29] in Haninge; Wat Siammin Mangkalaram[30] in Linköping, Östergötland; Wat Dalarnavanaram[31] in Borlänge; Wat Buddha Udayana[32] in Härryda; Wat Buddha Gothenburg[33]; Wat Pha Gothenburg[34].

Chinese Buddhists

The International Buddhist Progress Society, Sweden, (IBPS Sverige), representing Fo Kuang Shan, Taiwan, that emphasizes education, culture, cultivation and service, was established in 1996 as a daughter organization affiliated to the IBPS in the USA, Australia, England and Taiwan. It aims to promote knowledge on Buddhism, spread cultural values, carry out work in society, and cultivate the human mind through the practice of Buddhism. The IBPS temple in Sweden is situated at Roserberg, north of Stockholm, near the Arlanda Airport.

Vietnamese Buddhists

As in Denmark and Norway, the Vietnamese in Sweden generally came to Sweden as refugees after the Vietnamese war. There are more than 12,000 Vietnamese in Sweden at present, the majority of them Buddhists. They have a few associations and temples in Malmo, Bjuv and Gothenburg which organize cultural events, talks, chanting sessions, and education projects for children.

Vipassana

Vipassana groups in Sweden, as in most countries today, follow two major traditions: one that is developed based on Mahasi Siyado's methods as well as other teachers of vipassana from Thailand, Sri Lanka, and some Western countries, and the other based on SN Goenka's or U Ba Khin's methods. This group was informally started in 1977 and registered as a non-profit organization in 1986. It has run one residential retreat annually since 1977 and more than one residential retreat annually since 1986. Weekly meditation sessions have been carried on at Drom Tönpa Center since 1998. A newsletter is published and distributed once a year and informative email announcements are sent. Marie Ericsson has collected her own articles written for Buddhism.nu, and will in the very near future release them as a book.

Vipassana with SN Goenkaji

Dhamma Sobhana and Vipassana courses as taught by Goenkaji in Scandinavia began 1991, arranged by meditators who had travelled in Asia and learnt Vipassana there. After having held courses annually in Sweden and Denmark, the number of participants started increasing and the courses a year increased swelled to five. Devotees then started looking for a centre and the Dhamma Sobhana was established in February 2007. During 2010 there were fourteen ten-day courses, one Satipatthana Sutta-course (for experienced students), month-long courses and two Anapana courses for children. Between 1,100 and 1,200 students participated in a course at the centre last year.

The focus of the centre is only meditation and selfless service. There are no other activities at the centre. There are group sittings every week in many cities.

The actual running of the centre is organized by a trust and committees. Most of the people involved are Swedish, but there are also Danes and Norwegians. There are now four assistant teachers in Sweden and one in Norway. The courses are quite international, being bilingual, in Swedish and English, and on almost every course five-ten people listen to the evening discourse in other languages, like Spanish or Farsi.

There are no other centres or courses in Sweden in this tradition, and no courses in this tradition in Denmark and Norway, but there have been before. However, there are groups in Copenhagen and Oslo following the Goenkaji method. There is one ten-day course a year in Finland, Latvia and Lithuania affiliated to this centre in Sweden.

Dharmagruppen

Dharmagruppen[35] has forty-eight formal members and 127 persons on the email contact list. Anna Ryding and her sister started the organization in September 2008 as there was no Theravada Buddhist organization in Malmö where they could meet others, meditate, or invite a teacher to lead a session and give a Dharma talk. Anna Ryding had attended retreats in India and Sri Lanka (at Nilambe) during an Asian journey in 2007 and 2008, and earlier in England (Gaya house) and Stockholm, and she was eager to continue this practice with the support of a sangha group. With the recommendation of both her teacher, Upul Gamage of Nilambe meditation centre in Sri Lanka, and a friend of hers, Leif Magnusson, former chairman of KYL, a Tibetan Buddhist organisation in Malmö, she invited Sumana Ratnayaka (the present writer) to lead meditation and give Dharma talks once a month at their group. They started a homepage and found a place in town where they could meditate every week. They also came in contact with two Dharma teachers in Stockholm who came to lead a couple of retreats. Present activities include meditation every Thursday, and if they have no teacher coming, they listen to a recorded dharma talk, or have group discussion. Once a month they have guided meditation for newcomers, and have a yatra (silent pilgrimage) once every semes

Tri Ratna

[36]The details of Tri Ratna (formerly Friends of the Western Buddhist Order-FWBO) have already been described. As for Tri Ratna in Sweden there is a short introduction from the Stockholm Centre's web page www.stockholmsbuddhistcenter.se and some more about Triratna in general, from www.fwbo.org/index2.html. They have a retreat centre in Sala, near the river Dalälven. They publish an electronic newsletter twice a month.

The way they have chosen to calculate their members is to have only order members and mitras registered as members, i.e. people who are either ordained or those who have committed themselves to practice the Dharma in line with their specific tradition.

In Sweden Tri Ratna has approximately eighty official members, but every year they have about 230 different persons taking part in their activities. The addition of these two figures -300 - therefore represents the true number of participants. Every Buddhist group faces this difficulty of determining the exact number of participants unless they are officially registered in only one Buddhist organization.

Zenbuddhistiska Samfundet[37]

Zenbuddhistiska Samfundet (ZBS) is a religious charity run under the guidance of two qualified Zen teachers, whose purpose is to further the teaching and practice of Zen Buddhism. For this purpose, they have Zen centres in a number of cities in Sweden, Finland and Scotland, as well as a full-time training temple called Zengården. They hold regular introductions to Zen in both the city centres and at Zengården, as well as nine sesshins (intensive retreats) and a number of other Buddhist courses each year. ZBS owes its existence to Philip Kapleau Roshi, who trained in Japan, in the Harada-Yasutani lineage of Zen which was founded in the 1950s by two prominent Zen teachers, Harada Daiun Sogaku Roshi and Haku'un Yasutani Roshi. Kapleau Roshi received permission to teach from Yasutani Roshi in 1965. He founded the Rochester Zen Center in New York State in 1966 and he also taught in Sweden regularly from 1981. ZBS traces its origins back to the Zen group founded around those teaching visits. Today they are part of the Cloud-Water Sangha, the group of independent Zen Centres formed by Roshi Kapleau's successor, Bodhin Kjolhede Roshi. The two Zen teachers, Sante Poromaa Sensei and Kanja Odland Sensei at the Zen centre have received permission to teach in this lineage from Bodhin Kjolhede Roshi.

ZBS publishes a magazine called Zendo twice a year and sends its members a newsletter four times a year. They have a number of websites: the ZBS website (www.zazen.se), the website for Zengården (www.zentraining.org) and a website for each of their city centres, for which there are links on the zazen.se website. They have approximately 370 registered members.

Tibetan Buddhism

The Tibetan temples in Hägersten and Karme Tenpe Gyaltsen (KTG) were established in 1976 with the spiritual leadership of the sixteenth Karmapa and the centre had been led by the Ven. Lama Ngawang until he passed away on April 9, 2011. Today the centre is led by the Ven. Lama Tsultim Gyaltso Rinpoche. This centre and its teachings are based on the Karma Kagyu lineage. As in Denmark and Norway, Karma Kagyu is the most established lineage in Sweden.

There are about twenty Tibetan associations in Sweden. They organize meditation programmes and talks at different towns, but their main retreat centre is in Fellingsbro.

In addition there are associations to represent all the lineages of Tibetan Buddhism in different towns in Sweden. For example, Rangjung Yeshe Sangha, Bromma, (www.gomde.se), represents Karma Kagyu and Nyingmapa lineages: Ratnashri Meditation Center Lidingö, (home.swipnet.se/ratnashri) (www.drikung.org), and Stockholm Shambhala Meditation Group, (www.shambhala.nu), Karma kagyu; Sakya Changchub Chöling, Stockholm, Sakya lineage; Stockholm Meditation Centre, www.mediteraistockholm.org, and Goteborg Meditation Centre, (www.mediteraigoteborg.org), New Kadampa Tradition; Tara Center, Malmö, (www.kendentibet.com), and Aro Ter Lineage, Lund, (www.aroter.org), Nyingmapa; Tsog Nyi Ling Study Group, Vasteras, Gelugpa; Buddhist Group Göteborg, (www.buddhismen.se), Karma Kagyu, Diamond Way; Buddhist Group Stockholm, Bromma, (www.buddhismen.se): Karma Kagyu, Diamond Way; Föreningen för Tibetansk Buddhism i Göteborg (www.tibetanskbuddhism.se), and Urgyen Samten Rime Ling, Göteborg (www.tibetanskbuddhism.se), non-sectarian.

Additionally there are some newly developed associations like Karma Yönten Ling[38], an offspring from Föreningen Malmö Buddhistcentrum, which was established in 1981 and ended when it was transformed into different groups in 2006.

KYL started in 2003, and was given the blessing and name for a Buddhist centre by the Tibetan teacher Jetsün Khandro Rinpoche. She is related to both the Nyingma and the Karma Kagyu traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. However, KYL in not connected to any international organization but works as an independent group with the aim to offer Dharma teachings and meditation practice & retreats mainly related to the Tibetan tradition. Their main teachers are Lakha Lama Rinpoche, Stephan Pende (former Buddhist monk from the FPMT-tradition), Jetsünma Wangyal and Geshe Pema Rinpoche. They have around 120 members.

(The Buddhist Cooperation Council of Sweden) Sveriges Buddhistiska Samarbetsråd (SBS)

SBS was established 1993 by representatives of the main active Buddhist branches in Sweden: Theravada-, Tibetan- and Zen Buddhism, and at the moment consists of fouteen Buddhist Associations and their local branches. The Swedish Government approved the SBS in 2005 as a religious community entitled to receive state grants. Forty-odd religious communities are illegible for grants of the category in Sweden, now including the Buddhist community for the provision of religious services, pastoral care and education.

The Swedish Commission for Government Support to Faith Communities (SST) has one representative and one deputy from the SBS. The SST is an authority serving under the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. Hence, SST distributes state grants to the denominations other than the Church of Sweden. SST gives different sorts of support to the denominations and has ongoing dialogue concerning the prerequisites for the grants. Furthermore, SST handles matters concerning the denominations´ part in the coordination of emergency management. SST also works together with other authorities and organizations on matters concerning the denominations.

SBS has one representative in the interreligious commission of the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB). The task of the MSB is to enhance and support societal capacities for preparedness for and prevention of emergencies and crises. When one does occur, MSB supports the stakeholders involved by taking the right measures to control the situation.

SBS had one representative in the Government´s Council for Contact with Religious Communities until January 2011 presided by the Minister of Cultural Affairs.

On May 10, 2010, SBS took part in the establishment of the Inter-Religious Council of Sweden with the participation of religious leaders in Sweden initiated by Archbishop Anders Wejryd of the Church of Sweden.

SBS takes part in the network Swedish Interreligious Forum for Peace in cooperation with representatives of Bahai-, Christian-, Muslim- and Buddhist Communities.

Buddhist Graveyard and Stupa

An area for Buddhist graveyards[39] was allocated in 1989 at a public (Christian) cemetery in Malmö. This area has not been used fully because of lack of communication with the local Buddhist societies which consist of mostly Vietnamese immigrants.

In 2005, SBS contacted the Stockholm Cemeteries Administration (SCA) in order to apply for a Buddhist cemetery area. There was fruitful cooperation between these two organizations, which resulted in a permission to use a restricted area for a Buddhist graveyard (as there are also special areas for other non-Christian congregations).

Agreeing with the SCA, the SBS went further to get a stupa built at the ceremonial area of the graveyard. The stupa was constructed of the finest marble at Carrara, Italy, and then transported to Sweden. On Vesak, in May 2010, the stupa's installation took place with the recitation ceremonies performed by the Sangha members of SBS.[40] The final inauguration took place on August 29, 2010 with the participation of representatives of Swedish Buddhist communities, the Stockholm County Governor, SCA and the Catholic Church. The inauguration consisted mainly of a memorial ceremony for all those affected by catastrophe.

The stupa was enshrined with the relics of the Buddha and respected Tibetan Lamas donated by the representatives from the Theravada, Zen, and Tibetan monasteries and associations in Sweden.

There is another stupa in Fellingsbro, inaugurated in 1988 by HH the Dalai Lama during an inter-religious

Stupa in Sweden

service. This was the initiation for a private Buddhist cemetery made by the Tibetan Buddhist Community.

Present Member Organizations of the SBS

Although there are more than forty Buddhist organizations in Sweden the following fourteen are the accepted main member organizations of the SBS and entitled to receiving government grants per capita of their members:

Buddhist Vihara Association (Stockholm Buddhist Vihara); Buddhist Group Stockholm Karma Kagyu (Diamond Way Buddhism); Association for Tibetan Buddhism in Gothenburg; Karma Yönten Ling; Community of Tibetan Buddhism - Karme Tenpe Gyaltsen; Sakya Changchub Chöling; Swedish Soto-Zen Association; Buddharama Temple (Thai Buddhist Association); Vipassanagruppen; Wat Santinivas (Thai Buddhist Association); Triratna Buddhist Community (former Friends of the Western Buddhist Order); Zen Buddhist Society; Watdalarna (Thai Buddhist Association); Luleå Buddhist Association.

Conclusion

There are two major categories of Buddhists in Scandinavia, namely, immigrant Buddhists and local Buddhists. The immigrant Buddhists, a phenomenon seen over several decades, mostly depend on their traditional rituals mixed with their cultural events like the New Year celebrations, observance of the eight precepts on full moon days or on holidays close to full moon days, transference of merit to departed relatives by offering alms to monks and nuns in attendance, offering food to monks at temples, blessings invoked by monks by chanting selected protective discourses, and so on. The history of local Buddhists, however, goes as far back as the 1950s, perhaps a little earlier. Local Buddhists start their practice by reading texts, martial arts and meditation. They are motivated by new religious trends of applying mindfulness-based techniques for problems like depression and stress. They seem to position their religious life in the context of such fundamental Buddhist practices as self inquiry, harmony with changing patterns of life, the practice of loving-kindness for one's own inner development as well as for the benefit of others, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity, all fostering insight for personal development. Starting from meditation they move towards training in morality (sila) and generosity (dana), whereas immigrant Buddhists start with generosity (alms-giving for monks and nuns) and move toward sila and bhavana only subsequently. However, there is no clash between these two groups because they become motivated by their different approaches to practice.

It is important to note that certain key aspects of the outlook on life of the Scandinavian people is very much in agreement with the environment of free inquiry advocated by the Buddha in the Kalama-sutta of the Anguttara-nikaya, and the social and economic philosophy taught in such well-known discourses as the Cakkavattisãhanàda-sutta and the Sigalovada-sutta of the Dighanikaya. This consonance has created an atmosphere in Scandinavian society which encourages sympathy for the Buddhist way of life. The Scandinavian society still seems to be puzzled by the presence of the multiplicity of schools of Buddhism. However, when the representatives of different Buddhist groups perform their religious activities together in concord sharing the same venue, for instance, at a Buddha Day (Vesak) celebration in a capital city like Stockholm, or when they make circumambulations around a stupa, the differences among the Buddhist groups gets reduced to mere matters of cultural and ritualistic traditions. Although immigrant Buddhist groups have their own cultural identities and ritualistic differences, all agree to follow the central teachings such as the four noble truths, dependent arising and karma and rebirth.

In addition to a situation in which different Buddhist groups pursue their own practices without clashing with their Buddhist brethren, there is a marked improvement in the area of inter-religious understanding. Although misunderstandings and heated arguments were prevalent among different religious groups a few decades ago, currently religious dialogues, interfaith meetings and conferences respecting each other's identity and benefitting from each other's practices are fast becoming the norm. Buddhism, which does not encourage any form religious rivalry, has contributed immensely to this harmonious atmosphere.

There are sure signs that Buddhism is growing in Scandinavia and that it is gradually becoming one of the religions in the region. The Buddhist monasteries and centres belonging to all the three traditions, Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana, have been on the rise for the past several decades. Renowned Buddhist masters and teachers visit every year and inspire people in the Buddhist practice. HH Dalai Lama, who was awarded Noble Peace Prize in 1988, has been the most important single source of inspiration behind the resurgence of the Buddhist practice in the region.

The education system has incorporated Buddhism as a subject in the school curricula, and this has contributed immensely to the entry of Buddhism into the mainstream religious picture of the region. The integral approach to religious studies adopted by these countries include Buddhism from the intermediate level of school education up to the research studies at universities in Scandinavia, just like anywhere else in the world. It is noteworthy that both the Norwegian and Swedish governments have been giving annual grants to Buddhist groups. In Norway these funds have been made available since the 1980s through the country's Buddhist Federation. In Sweden the practice was started in 2005, and the funds are made available through SBS.

Buddhist academic activities have been strong in the region for more than a century. What is new is the contribution made by different Buddhist groups to study their own Buddhist canons and their own classical source languages such as Pali, Sanskrit and Tibetan. Much before the Buddhist monasteries were established in the region, the complete Theravada canon in Thai script in thirty-nine volumes (with a short introduction of them on the cover page in English, German and French) was donated to some university libraries in the region by the Thai King Chulalangkorn who visited Scandinavia in the 1890s. These copies are found in the rare book collection of Karolina Rediviva of Uppsala University, Lund University library, Oslo University library, and others. More recently, in 2005 and 2010, the World Tipitaka Project of Thailand has donated the newly edited Romanized Tipitaka in forty volumes to Uppsala University and Oslo University. The acts of this nature by traditional Buddhist groups show that Buddhist practice for them is not exclusively confined to rites and rituals. In this manner, the overall picture of Buddhism in the Scandinavia is one of mutual enrichment by both the so-called immigrant and local Buddhists.

Notes

1 teo.au.dk/fileadmin/www.teo.au.dk/samtidsreligion/materialer-forfatter/jb-buddhism-dk-en.pdf

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4 The Critical Pāli Dictionary Online is a project carried out by the Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies (ToRS) at The University of Copenhagen. Contact: tors@hum.ku.dk

5 teo.au.dk/fileadmin/www.teo.u.dk/samtidsreligion/materialer-forfatter/jb-buddhism-dk-en.pdf p.4.

6 teo.au.dk/fileadmin/www.teo.u.dk/samtidsreligion/materialer-forfatter/jb-buddhism-dk-en.pdf p 9.

7 It is erroneously stated that "900 of the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees are Buddhist" in the Wikipedia article: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism_in_Denmark.

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14 www.tarab-institute.org

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17 www.skandinaviskzencenter.org

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20 I am indebted to Egil Lothe, the President of Buddhist Federation, Eevi Beck Myreng, Professor of Education, Oslo University and Tilak Perera, the President of the Tisarana Buddhist Association, for providing me with much of the details under Buddhism in Norway.

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33 www.dhammakaya.or.th

34 www.watphagothenburg.multiply.com

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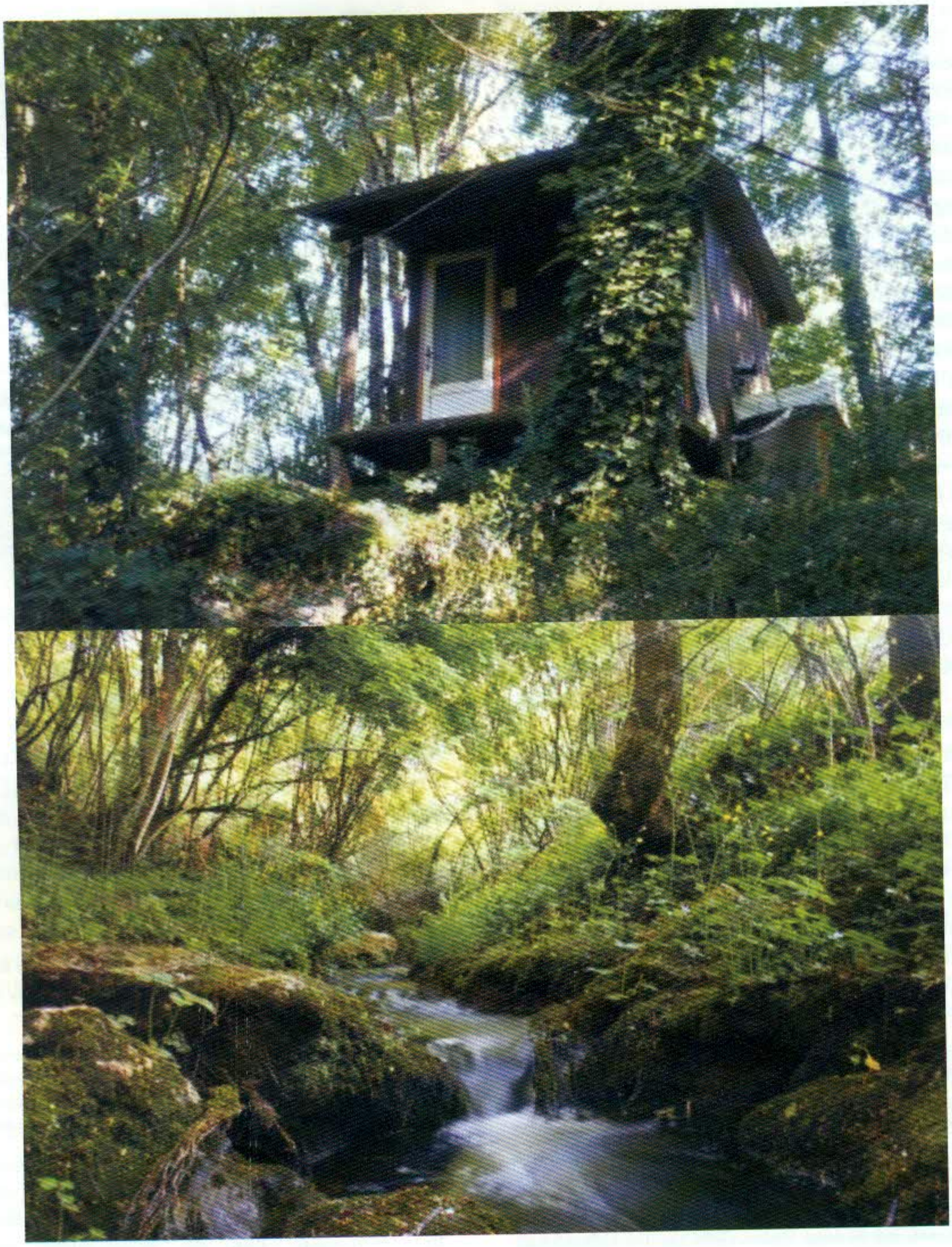
36 I am grateful to Satyaprabha for the details given under Tri Ratna

37 I am indebted to Shuna Lennon, Zengården Zendoleader for these details

38 buddhism.se

39 In Stockholm, the municipality is responsible for cemeteries. In the rest of Sweden, it is a social task that the Swedish church congregations take care of. The cost of burials and cremations are paid through taxes through a special burial tax, but the fee does not cover all the costs associated with funerals

40 www.buddhism-sbs.se/Stupa_2010.html



ESSAY 31

Buddhism in Italy

The Italian Challenge

Maria Angela Falà

Introduction

Buddhism in Italy has a shorter history with respect to other European countries, even if in the recent past we have assisted in an increasing growth of interest. The integration of Buddhist concepts in daily life and the escalating interest in the relative problems that this entails is another point in the emerging varied Italian Buddhist archipelago, and at the same time it highlights the "good health" the Dharma enjoys in Italy. It is no longer just a religious and esoteric experience of individuals or small groups, as in the first half of the century, but it is a way and a means to put oneself in relationship with daily life and to work with your own mind. A sign of this new era is the creation of the Italian Buddhist Union which officially represents the Buddhists of the Italian state.

Two and a half thousand years after his passing away, humanity is still drawing inspiration, stimulus, and hope from the ancient teachings of the Blessed Sakyamuni. Reaching Europe and acquiring its own local identity, Buddhism has taken on new aspects of adaptation to the diversity of Western practitioners. On the whole, Italy and Europe do not have their own Dharma tradition and are the best laboratory for an "inter-Buddhist" encounter. There is no background of disputes and diatribe among the various schools and so it can propose a Buddhism connected to tradition but free from traditionalism. Perhaps this is the task Europe has. The continent is young from the Buddhist point of view, but nevertheless an "old" culture. It can create a new environment in which the universal message of the Buddha can find unity and fullness in diversity and richness in its manifold traditions.

In Western countries, the knowledge, and in particular the practice of Buddhism, is a relatively new phenomenon when compared to the long history of the Dharma, and even more so, to the Italian scenario in comparison with other European countries.[1] At the end of the nineteenth century, Buddhist texts were translated into Italian and then published, while illustrious names in the fields of philosophy, art, and religion have shown interest in the message of the Buddha in a period of great cultural and economic change in Italian society.

Previously there was an interest in Eastern religions connected to the missionary spirit of the Catholic Church.[2] For example, this was true in Naples and in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Since 1732, there has been a center for university studies known as the College of Chinese and Oriental Studies in the European continent, founded for missionary intentions by Matteo Ripa, a priest who worked as a painter and copper engraver at the court of the Manchurian Emperor Kangxi. When he returned to Italy in November 1724, he was accompanied by four young Chinese together with a Mandarin language teacher, thus establishing the nucleus of the new college. In 1868, after the Unification of Italy, the Chinese College was transformed into the Real Asiatic College, and divided into two sections: the old one reserved for missionary studies and the new one open to young lay people interested in the study of the spoken languages of Eastern Asia. It was later transformed into the Eastern Institute, but the missionary section was suppressed, and it was recognized as a University.

However, at the end of the nineteenth century, in the new Reign of Italy, interest in eastern studies arose in other academic institutes as works from E Burnouf, Max Müller and E Arnold crossed over from the other side of the Alps. In some Italian universities courses in Sanskrit were held. In Turin Gaspare Gorresio translated the *Ramayana,* and in the same city A Severini and C Puini taught at the Regio Institute of Higher Studies, while in 1873, Puini, a prominent sinologist, wrote *Studi intorno alla religione buddhistica* ("Studies on Buddhist Religion") and translated the *Mahaparinirvanasutra* (1911) from Chinese.

An association called "Società Asiatica Italiana" (Italian Asian Association), very unpretentious in comparison to similar associations in other European countries, was created in Florence where Puini had moved in order to teach History and Geography of Eastern Asia (1886-1935) at the local university. However, only with the work of G De Lorenzo in Naples and E Frola can we talk of the first interest in Buddhist practice. De Lorenzo (1871-1957), whose background is quite different — he had been Director of the Institute of Geology and Physics and Professor at the University of Naples — published *India e Buddhismo Antico* ("India and Ancient Buddhism") in 1926, considered one of the pioneer publications in the spread of the Dharma in Italy.

He translated the *Majjhima Nikaya* ("Collection of the Middle Length Discourses"), already published by KE Neumann in a German version in Austria, and dedicated himself to the practice of Buddhism, leaving a testament of his faith just before his death. Another translator of canon texts was E Frola from Turin, who published the Italian version of the *Digha Nikaya* ("Collection of Long Discourses"), working directly from the original Paḷi text. At the end of the Forties, a group was formed around Professor Frola to meditate on the texts according to the Theravada tradition. The group was given the name of another personality of the initial stages of Italian Buddhism, Lokanatha, a travelling monk, whose actual name was Salvatore Cioffi (1897-1966). He was considered a great figure in Burma and dedicated himself to spreading the Dharma in Asia, America and Europe.[3] He was born in Naples and emigrated to the Unites States with his family. After his scientific studies in chemistry and medicine, he approached Buddhism. He went to Asia to visit the holy places of the Buddha and was ordained as a monk in 1925 in Burma. From there he returned to Italy to spread the Dharma. In that period Italy was under Mussolini's Fascist government and was not open to novelty from abroad; moreover, the times were certainly not favorable for Dharma teachings. In 1928, Lokanatha decided to return to Asia on foot and retired to meditate in northern India. During the Second World War, being Italian, he was confined in an English detention camp and was not able to return to Burma until 1946 where he founded, in Mandalay, a center for foreign Buddhists. After that, he began his mission to spread the Dharma in the world by travelling to other parts of Asia, America and Europe. He was a great supporter of the work of Dr Ambedkar in India who helped in the conversion of the *dalit* (the outcaste) to Buddhism in 1956. Although Lokanatha was a Theravadin by tradition, he was always recognized the value of other schools and the importance of dialogue by contributing to the creation of the World Buddhist Fellowship in Sri Lanka in the Fifties and staying in contact with his disciples all over the world.

In Italian culture, the knowledge and the practice of Buddhism owe much to the great scientific works of Giuseppe Tucci (1894-1983), who was not only a rigorous scholar but one who respected and appreciated the spiritual value of Buddhism, giving life to a school of Oriental Studies in Rome, and contributing much to the spread of the scientific knowledge of Buddhism in Italy and the world.

Tucci's work, characterized by a deep personal interest in the Vajrayana Buddhist tradition, was varied and structured. He stayed in Eastern countries from 1925 to 1930 and taught at the universities of Shantiniketan and Calcutta. He travelled through Nepal and participated in different scientific expeditions in western and central Tibet, in mostly unexplored regions, gathering a number of historical documents and artistic-literary material which he studied and published in a series of works edited by the Academy of Italy. He directed five archeological campaigns in the valley of Swat (today Pakistan) and three in Afghanistan. He not only studied the Tibetan culture in depth, but during the period immediately preceding the Chinese invasion, he saved from destruction many manuscripts and artistic finds of Tantric Buddhism. Today, they are conserved (and dedicated to him) at the National Museum of Eastern Art in Rome, and at the ISIAO (Italian Institute for Africa and the East) — formerly ISMEO — also in Rome.[4] Here, Prof. Tucci not only founded the Institute but was its president from 1948. His work was of great value in the field of science. However, he was also responsible for the growth of Buddhist practice in Italy. In 1960, he invited two Tibetan exiles, geshe Jampel Senghe and Namkhai Norbu Rimpoce, to be part of the ISMEO and they introduced people to the Tibetan language, the philosophy, and the Vajarayana practices. They founded centers and practice groups which are still active today.[5]

After G Tucci, Corrado Pensa filled the professorship post at the University of Rome. He too was interested in Buddhist spirituality not only from the academic point of view, but as a teacher and guide of vipassana meditation groups called Ameco (Association for Awareness Meditation), connected to the Thai forest tradition, which still operates in Rome. Author of different works regarding Eastern philosophies, Pensa is the prototype of a new type of Orientalist who started with the philosophical and philological search and concluded with religious experience, managing to conjugate intellectual research and personal practice.

Italian philosophy has demonstrated a certain interest in Buddhism since the end of the nineteenth century. The philosopher Piero Martinetti, who had an interest in Hindu thought as a result of studting Schopenauer's works, held lessons on "Indian wisdom" at the beginning of the century at the University of Milan, even though he tended to interpret Hindu and Buddhist doctrine according to Western concepts and categories, thus preventing a correct interpretation as they were extraneous. Besides the interest shown by G Colli in the Sixties following his study of Nietzsche's works and on the ancient Greek philosophy, we find in Padova, G Pasqualotto, who was particularly interested in the relationship between Western and Eastern thought, studying in depth the thoughts of M Heidegger and Zen philosophy and the relationship between esthetic values and emptiness. The Venetian school of Massimo Cacciari and Emanuele Severino was interested in such themes too. Oscar Botto (University of Turin), and I Vecchiotti and V Arena (University of Urbino) need to be mentioned as far as historical research is concerned.

In the field of psychology, Buddhism has aroused interest among many therapists as well as those in the academic environment. In the last few years, in Italy as well as in other Western countries, interest in Buddhism in the academic scenario has expanded from a particular Oriental environment to different areas such as psychology. In the case of transpersonal psychology, some trends acknowledge fundamental Buddhist values, analyzing the effects on the human mind and on the pattern of how the mind works. The fact that psychology and psychotherapy are an integral part of our culture in this century and are open to the Dharma has brought about a higher interest in the experiential aspect, which was neglected by traditional Orientalists who were closely bound to philosophical interests. Today, we can say no treatise on psychology exists without a chapter on meditation and there are many scholars seeking a true experimental unity, a sincere and deep interest in the Buddhist religious experience. This new reality has arisen from a dialogue between Buddhism and psychology, and psychological-cognitive insight which would have not been possible a short time ago when psychoanalysis and religion were considered antithetical.

After all, many Buddhist teachers use terms and psychological concepts in their teachings with their students. The above-mentioned Pensa is one of these teachers. Although he is grounded in classic Orientalism, he follows Jungian psychoanalytical training and is connected to the Insight Center of Barre (Mass. USA), which proposes a close bond between Western psychology and Buddhist meditative practices. Another figure in the national scenario is Riccardo Venturini, Professor of Clinical Psychophysics at the University of Rome, who is interested in consciousness states within psychology and oriental traditions and in the effects of meditation. His main interest deals with Japanese traditions (in particular the Tendai school) and for the interfaith dialogue mostly through Religions' World Conferences for Peace (WCRP).[7] Another organization in this field is the Mindfulness Project, founded in Milan in 2003 in collaboration with FPMT (Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition) and the Institute of Lama Tsong Khapa of Pomaia with the idea of contributing to an in-depth dialogue between Western thought and the Dharma, with particular attention to counseling. Consisting of researchers, psychologists, psychotherapists, trainers, counselors and Buddhist teachers committed to the research of an efficient "cultural translation" of the Buddhist teachings in order to make them more usable in Western reality, the experience of Mindfulness Project enhances different traditions that agree with some of the schools and orientations of Western psychology (cognitivism, humanistic psychology, values psychology, trans-personal psychology, Jungian psychoanalysis).

From a practical point of view, Buddhism in Italy has a shorter history when compared to other European countries, even if in the recent past we have assisted to increase the growth of interest. If we exclude De Lorenzo who, as mentioned above, was a pioneer in spreading Buddhism in Italy with his 1926 book *India e Buddhism antico* ("India and Ancient Buddhism") and partly Tucci, whose text *Buddismo* ("Buddhism"), also dated 1926, demonstrates a real knowledge of practical Buddhism, we can appropriately speak more specifically only after the Second World War.

At the end of the Forties, the Lokanatha group was formed in Turin. In the Sixties, engineer L Martinelli founded the Italian Buddhist Association in Florence which was linked to the Buddhist Society of London and the Buddhist Publication Society of Kandy (Sri Lanka); in addition, the first Italian Buddhist magazine was published, *Buddhismo Scientifico* (1967) ("Scientific Buddhism)". A pagoda was also opened in the Casentino area (Tuscany), in a building owned by them and is still operating today.[8]

But in the Seventies, in the wake of stimuli coming from other Western countries and the vogue of experiencing the Orient, groups of followers began to develop, and having met Buddhist teachers of different traditions and having approached Dharma through readings and meetings, they gathered to form communities or meditation centers spread mostly in northern Italy, tied to the Tibetan, Zen and Theravada traditions.

The first meetings took place in private homes, in rented places or martial arts gyms, generally in Milan and Turin, cities with a higher presence of interested people and patrons. It was a marginal phenomenon, and, according to public opinion, assimilated to the schools and movements coming from the East in that period, such as Hare Krishna, Osho, and Transcendental Meditation, without its own precise physiognomy. During the Eighties, such a physiognomy was slowly acquired and permanent centers and communities were established. This was thanks to the great number of patrons, in particular in the center and north, thanks to a better diffusion of knowledge about Buddhism on the part of public opinion due to the Nobel Peace Prize Award assigned to HH the fourteenth Dalai Lama in 1989 and to the various films on Buddhist topics such as Bertolucci's *Little Buddha*, Annaud's *Seven Years in Tibet*, and Scorsese's *Kundun*.

The mass media began to be more specific as to the definition of the Buddhist movement which distinguished Buddhism from other Eastern movements, even if up to today there is still a lot of confusion when, in the case of Dalai Lama, the head of a particular Buddhist school, he is compared to the Pope and therefore considered to be head of all Buddhists.

It is worth noting that in Italy as well as the rest of the West a spread of different Buddhist schools occurred, and not just of one tradition. This made it difficult for public opinion because it tends to simplify and standardize. This fact made it possible to promote an inter-Buddhist dialogue that was not possible in the East where it was difficult for different traditions to co-exist in the same territory.

In Italy, the essential Buddhist transmission lines were those of the Theravada tradition, of the Mahayana, Zen and Chan Chinese, of the Vajrayana with the Ghelugpa, Kagyupa, Nigmapa and Sakyapa schools. The latter represents the majority of the Italian centers, due to the presence of many refugee teachers from Tibet.

Alongside the traditional schools, Soka Gakkai, one of the lay Japanese movements born in the last century and tied to the philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin, has found fertile ground in Italy and has had widespread success. It represents a unique experience and has no direct contact with traditional Buddhism.[9]

In the course of the past thirty years we have assisted what can be defined as a development of "dharma consciousness" in Italy. With this term, we mean an introduction of new elements in the Italian Buddhist context such as male and female monastic vocations, lay and non-lay meditation training and acknowledgement of teachers, more events for practice and divulgation, the strengthening of interfaith dialogue, more publications, magazines and translations of original texts or of works from teachers and scholars.[10]

The integration of Buddhist concepts in daily life and the increasing interest in relative problems that this entails is another point in the emerging varied Italian Buddhist archipelago, while at the same time it highlights the "good health" the Dharma enjoys in Italy. It is no longer just a religious and esoteric experience of individuals or small groups as in the first half of the century, but is a means to develop a relationship with your daily life and to work with your own mind. Buddhism in its essence has never been something to preserve as an untouchable relic, but live teachings always open the stimulus coming from different cultures of the countries where they are widely spread. It is an experience that can connect with the life of each and everyone, with every single existence becoming richer as it is confronted by society; it gives answers to problems of human conditions, which in essence are identical regarding all Orientals and Westerners.

Work on one's own mind, which is changing the attitude toward that which happens inside or outside - an effort common to those who approach the teachings of the Buddha – is one of the aspects that denotes the implanting of the Dharma. At first there was an adherence to rapid consumption of a sort of Buddhism, a spiritual supermarket, but now Italy has arrived at a more mature phase, a contemplated choice with long-term commitments. Spiritual work, as the work of a good artisan, requires attention, perseverance, love and care for whatever one does. It has nothing to do with superficial external changes, for it is an internal change. Old habits of attachment and possessiveness take the place of openness and willingness to overcome mental unrest and egoistic isolation and to confront oneself with daily life in a serene way. This confrontation shows us clearly the real level of our work with the mind and on its thought process.

Being open to comparison is a feature that has allowed Buddhism to be spread in societies and among people that are deeply different historically and culturally, without using force for conversion, wars and violence. Suffering, the state of dissatisfaction tied to existence is common to all; the teachings that are useful to overcome these are valid and applicable for all.

In Italy, the Catholic Church has been the Holy See for thousands of years. A particular Christian-Buddhist dialogue has typically developed in the country. Rapport with the Catholic world, mostly on the level of spiritual experience, has been worthwhile. There have been exchanges between monks, the introduction of Buddhist meditation in the Christian environment, meetings, and conferences. Being open to dialogue[11] between religions is important at this historical moment. The religious aspect, especially after September 11, 2001, has gained greater importance as institutions have shown a growing interest by turning to exponents of various religions for advice and support in ethical and civil fields.[12]

Accepting an open dialogue means giving up the idea of being the repository of absolute truths and using the religious credo as a defense of one's own identity. This is difficult for the traditional fundamentalist, but also for those who have entrusted themselves to a religion different from the one they were born into and which they usually feel hostility towards. Overcoming this position on the part of those committed to a spiritual path is a proactive attitude emerging on the part of Catholics as well as Buddhists allowing a second cross-reading of the traditions. R Pannikkar, a pioneer in this field, defines it as an authentically "interfaith" dialogue in which people question themselves and understand the relativity of their own credo. Panikkar says: "The true dialogue between religions is religion on its own and it establishes itself in man's heart in search of his own spiritual path."[13]

At the beginning of the Eighties some Buddhist practitioners, considered "pioneers" within their own small established Italian groups, began to come out of isolation and look for contact with other Dharma realities. That is how an association above any tradition was born. This was supposed to function as an institutional interlocutor with the authorities and foster relations with the various centers.

After a few unsuccessful attempts, in 1984 the determined Vincenzo Piga, one of the fundamental authors of recent Buddhist history in Italy,[14] called meetings concerning the statute of what is now l'Unione Buddhista Italiana (UBI) (Italian Buddhist Union), which was founded on April 17, 1985, in Milan. Nine centers from different traditions participated under Vittorio Giavotto, president pro tempore.[15]

At the following meeting held at Lama Tsong Khapa Institute in Pomaia on January 25, 1986, nine more centers joined the UBI and elected as their president Giuseppe Molinari, a monk from the Vajrayana tradition.[16]

Since its origin, UBI has been a union of centers not representing just one school, but supportive of the entire Italian Buddhist movement "respecting all the traditions of the Doctrine in all its articulations" (Article 2 of the Statute). Today, the UBI is composed of monastic and lay Theravada and Mahayana; Ch'an, Zen and Korean Soen; Mahayana-Vajrayana; Gelugpa, Kagyupa, Nyingmapa and Sakyapa.

As Article 4 states, its objectives are to "reunite and assist the different Italian Buddhist groups; to contribute to the diffusion of teachings and practice of the Buddhist Doctrine in its different schools and traditions, in particular with support actions, encouragement and coordination of initiatives of the different Buddhist groups; develop collaboration between different groups; foster dialogue with other religious communities and in general with the centers of spiritual commitment, as well as with cultural institutes on topics of common interest; to cultivate rapports with the European Buddhist Union,[17] the World Buddhist Fellowship and other Buddhist organizations abroad and international ones, to manage and promote teaching on Buddhism in the context of the history of religions".

A spirit of membership is the basis of the common work, and the center's autonomy is always highlighted as far as teaching and management are concerned. UBI does not interfere with the activity of its members and intervenes only upon request in serious cases.

Once the headquarters in Pomaia was established in 1986, the UBI started to present itself as an institution to request Italian Buddhists for an Agreement with the state, according to Article 8 of the Constitution, which concerns religions other than Catholicism. This, however, was the main reason for the UBI's creation.

In effect, the Italian Constitution, having affirmed that all religions are equally free in law and have the right to become organized according to their own statutes - as long as they don't contrast with the Italian judiciary order - establishes that their rapport with the state is regulated on the basis of intent with the relative representations. After the conclusion of the treaties, the Agreement, signed by the Under-Secretary of State and the representative of the religious confession, was submitted to the Council of Ministers. Having been signed by the Premier and the President, the Agreement was transmitted to Parliament for approval, after which it came into effect.

The path toward the Buddhist Intent was not an easy one. Being considered initially as a representative of the Buddhist movement, UBI had to obtain legal status as a religious body (DPR Jan. 3, 1991) and at that point it was able to ask the government to begin negotiations to stipulate the Agreement.

For many years this request was ignored and only in 1998 was a series of meetings arranged with the Interministerial Committee for Intents headed by Prof Francesco Pizzetti, which lead to the first agreement in 2000 under the D'Alema government. We say "first agreement" because the UBI had signed the same Intent twice. The first time, in the year 2000, it never became effective; it wasn't converted into law as the procedure prescribes. The second time was in 2006, when Prodi's government asked that it be re-signed together with other Agreements discussed and accepted by the government in the meantime. This second Agreement, like the others signed,[18] has not yet completed all the parliamentary procedures. It exists, but it is not applicable. A decisive step is missing: its conversion into law.

The Agreements with the UBI and afterwards the Hindu Union represent something quite new in Italy. In effect these are the first two non-Abrahamic religions that have stipulated such an agreement with the State and have broken the Jewish-Christian monopoly of Intents, which was felt to be a duty toward the country's ancient minorities.

The presence on the national territory of new faith communities that have reached a relatively high number in the past few years will certainly require fresh attention on the part of the legislator and in a more general legal form. In addition, it should overcome the law of the cults admitted in 1929 and the Regi Decrees of 1930, emanated during the Fascist regimes, that even today, with the necessary amendments, regulate rapports between State and religious confessions without agreement and consequently even with Buddhists.

A bill on religious freedom has been presented many times in the course of past legislatures, but without fortune,although it is evident it is needed as Italian society is changing due to the rise of globalization and evolution of international scenarios.

On the whole, the text of the Buddhist Agreement is not particularly original as it traces the agreements already stipulated and guarantees the protection of Buddhism with the request of the complete autonomy of UBI as well as the associated centers. It concerns the appointment of ministers of religion, the organization of the community, and the terms concerning discipline and spirituality; the religious education and training, the protection of the places destined to be the practice of the faith.

In addition, with the Agreement, and by a financial mechanism, UBI would receive economic aid from the state connected to the citizens' offerings, to be used for cultural, social and humanitarian events, even concerning underdeveloped countries, besides welfare programs and faith support.

Negotiations about the Agreement stipulation have been useful even as a stimulus of reflection within the Buddhist movement mainly for the definition of "ministers of faith", which in the first text was termed "Teachers of Dharma". It proposes to distinguish the term from that of the Christian Churches. The debate was penetrating, highlighting the difficulty of making all religions adhere to one model, even though the definition of "ministers of faith" for teachers, monks, nuns, and lay teachers was finally accepted.

The need to safeguard those who choose a monastic path (ordained sangha) was highlighted. Obviously they presented details such as the rule of poverty, asking for charity daily and observing rules regarding dress.

However, in the West there is a great tendency to transfer meditation practice from the monastery to a lay or urban context. This has brought different representatives of Western Buddhism to elaborate new meditation practices and support structures (groups, urban centers, etc.), specifically directed to awakening religious sentiment in daily life.

Today there are forty-five centers that are part of the UBI. About half of these are guided by Western teachers, recognized by the tradition of origin, but only half of these are dedicated exclusively to the teaching of the Dharma. The others have a regular job and manage the centers as a fringe activity. As mentioned before, this is according to the Buddhist practice in which integrating Buddhist principles in daily life is favored since there is no dichotomy between working on oneself and working with others, and where the lay state is predominant.

The centers are mostly in the north of the country. UBI is mainly represented in Piedmont, Lombardy, the Veneto area, and the Emilia Romagna, Tuscany and Lazio regions. The Buddhists in the north represent over three-quarters of the entire Buddhist presence in Italy, numbering about 70,000 people of Italian origin and 30,000 from Asiatic countries. Some centers connected with the latter are part of UBI.[19]

The presence in the south is quite weak: there are single practitioners or interested people, but there are no stable entities if we exclude the centers operating for several years in Palermo, Taranto and Naples. To make UBI's presence visible in the south, in 2005 and in 2009 the national Vesak festivals were organized in Naples and in Palermo and generating interest in public opinion, even if an effective increase of centers did not occur. The Vesak celebration is one of the main activities organized by UBI and recognized by the Italian state, taking place at the end of May when exponents of various traditions celebrate Buddha Sakyamuni with festivities, teachings and cultural activities.

The remarkable difference of followers between northern and southern Italy is evident and maybe a sign of the difference existing in the perception of the East and the difficulty of the "new", and of being accepted in some social contexts. The Neapolitan experience is emblematic. Naples, mentioned briefly before, has been working at a university level (Oriental Institute) for centuries and has always been a very active cultural center, but the Buddhist tradition as a religious practice has not found fertile ground, in spite of the presence of Namkhai Norbu, a teacher of Tibetan at the institute, a great living *nyingmapa* teacher who later founded his own international center, Merigar, in Tuscany.[20]

The group's composition is usually heterogeneous, even if female presence is certainly predominant; however the women are represented less at an organizational level, which is similar to other religious experiences. Women are more attracted to spiritual research, but due to their social context, they have not yet reached a full awareness of their own possibilities and trust in themselves and they propose religious institutional models where the dominant management level and the teachers are males. UBI, however, has been the first European National Union where the president was a female.

Schooling is more extensive in the centers of Theravada and Zen tradition; high school (about 50%) and a good percentage of holders of degrees (25%). The average age of the practitioners is forty-fifty years and at least a third of them have followed the teachings for more than fifteen years. The presence of youth has tended to decrease with time. Usually young people over twenty attend the centers and there is not a specific facility to welcome them; they are often integrated into the meditation and study groups. On the other hand, Soka Gakkai has specific facilities for young people and periodic meetings for this age group.

A different story is the motivation that urges people to adhere to Buddhism. Usually, people come from a Catholic tradition, and have lived in a superficial and conventional way or from a general agnostic state. A fundamental point is the perception that Buddhist teachings do not have a dogmatic or doctrinal character. The multi-centenary flexibility and the will to question one's own cultural forms have represented a precious heredity for Buddhism to be able to face a complex society in rapid transformation. Without questioning its own fundamental thesis, the Buddhadharma does not lose sight of the relativity of conceptual formulation and of the norms and how the skillful means work (*upaya kausalya*) to reach enlightenment, the goal, and therefore it remains open to the various formulations that meet the emerging demanding needs of different cultures it comes into contact with.

Another aspect raised is the encouragement of the cultivation of experimental means of intuitive and meta-rational understandings together with the use of logical-discursive thought. However, the interior practice favored, with sophisticated meditative tools, gives access to a direct experience of the sacred.

Another motivation is the anti-authoritarian tendency that controls the risks of an institutionalized centralization and fosters respect toward the plurality of religious orientations inside and outside Buddhism. With this view, individual responsibility is accentuated rather than the uncritical acceptance of laws or arguments; therefore Buddhism leans on ethics in which discipline is indicated as medicine to overcome the state of existential dissatisfaction and malaise.

Another motivation for some was a rapport with the contemporary sciences and therefore the acquisition on the part of Buddhism of an understandable language to Westerners, especially in the field of psychology and epistemology.

And not to be neglected is the presence of qualified teachers both Oriental and Western, making the proposed way of realization authentic and complete.

In defining a practitioner, we normally consider — according to the Ministry of the Interior — those who, at least in the past three years, have taken refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha and follow the practice with consistency, attending groups, seminars, and retreats. Many people have taken a liking to following the activities from time to time but cannot be considered to belong to the community. This superficial support peaks during moments when mass media, for various reasons, picks up on themes of Oriental spirituality, such as in the case when films on well-known people like HH the Dalai Lama are screened, or testimonials of stars such as Richard Gere or Sharon Stone are made, or the publication of books. Buddhist centers usually have a difficult time controlling these phenomena since their work is based on personal example or on a spirit of loving welcome instead of an organized structure capable of supporting the arrival of numerous interested people who have to be closely observed. There certainly are organizational limits, but these reflect the Buddhist tradition being far from institutionalized proselytism. Numbers are not emphasized in the centers but quality and motivation of the practitioners make the work of a "good artisan" possible; a spiritual work that requires perseverance, attention to detail, and love for what one is doing.

Regarding the main groups existing in Italy, the presence of Theravada is pervasive due to the aforementioned Ven. Lokanatha and E Frola in Turin and Martinelli in Florence. At the end of the Seventies and in the early Eighties, schools tied to the Burmese school of U Ba Khin developed through the teachings of disciples of the great lay Buddhist pioneer, the American John Coleman, and the Orientals

Goenka and Mother Sayamagyi.

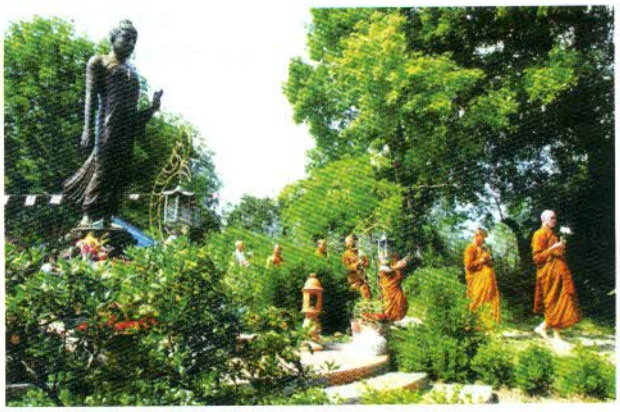
In Rome, under the inspiration of Corrado Pensa, meditation groups in the university environment were formed giving origin to the Association for Awareness Meditation (Ameco), which follows the teaching of the forest and is connected to the Insight Meditation Center of Barre (Mass. USA). A peculiarity of this community is its strictly non-confessional attitude and the interest of the interfaith dialogue which is put into action by the meetings and presence of teachers from all Buddhist traditions and Christian traditions as well. The Rome headquarters is a place of encounter for many communities and it offers the possibility of silent meditation and contemplation.

In 1990, in Sezze near Rome, the first monastery of Theravada tradition was founded, Santacittarama, the "Garden of the Serene Heart", later transferred to Frasso Sabino in the province of Rieti. In the monastery, under the guidance of the Abbot Bhikkhu Chandapalo, a style of life inspired directly from the Thai forest tradition according to Ajhan Chah takes place. The days are organized in meditation, study and work under the spiritual guidance of Ajhan Sumedho. Since its beginnings, Santacittarama has been a point of reference for many people both from the West or Asiatic (Thai, Sri Lankan) immigrants in our country who treat it as a place of aggregation and participate in the Sunday celebrations.

Santacittarama was recognized as a place of worship in 1995 and offers religious assistance, promotes dialogue with other faiths, fosters the publication of Buddhist texts and is a point of reference for the diffusion of Theravada in Italy.

The most active Vajrayana tradition present is the Tibetan Gelugpa that can boast a "long" history with the Lama Tsong Khapa Institute of Pomaia, founded in the Seventies under the inspiration of Lama Yeshe[21] and presently under the spiritual guidance of Lama Zopa. The institute is part of the FPMT (Foundation for the Preservation of Mahayana Tradition).

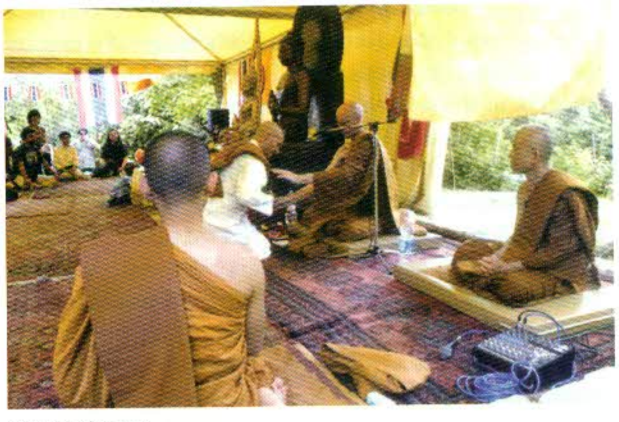
Santacittarama Monastery



Vesakha Puja

The headquarters of the institute in the hills of the Tuscan hinterland is a landmark for Italian Buddhism besides being a stable community of monks, nuns, and lay people. It welcomes and gives hospitality to teachers and groups of various Buddhist traditions. In effect, the institute was founded as an inspiring institute for Mahayana Buddhism, to be a center of study, to hold seminars and conferences, and a to be a place where other activities can be held for the spread of Buddhism. Geshe Ciampa Gyatso has been a resident teacher for almost thirty years and has been an important figure for many Italian Buddhists that have received the teachings from him.[22]

Similarly, but in an urban context, other Gelupa centers operate, like the Ghe Pel Ling Institute in Milan and the Samantabhadra Institute in Rome. The first was founded in 1978 by Geshe Rabten (1920-1986) and is connected to the great monastery in Rikon in the Swiss



Novice ordination

Alps. Here resides Thamtog Rimpoce, a direct disciple of HH the Dalai Lama, who also works in other centers in northern Italy and in various parts of the world (Canada, United States, and Japan). The Ghe Pel Ling Institute promotes the knowledge and culture of the Tibetan people and the study and the practice of the Gelugpa tradition as transmitted by HH the Dalai Lama. Five monks reside there and Dharma meditation courses and regular religious ceremonies take place.

The Samantabhadra Institute in Rome was officially established in 1981, although the founding group had been following Geshe Jampel Senghe's teachings for a long time. In the Sixties, he had been invited by Giuseppe Tucci to work at the ISMEO (Italian Institute for Middle and Far Eastern Asian Studies) in Rome with a scholarship of the Rockefeller Foundation. He passed away at the end of 1981.

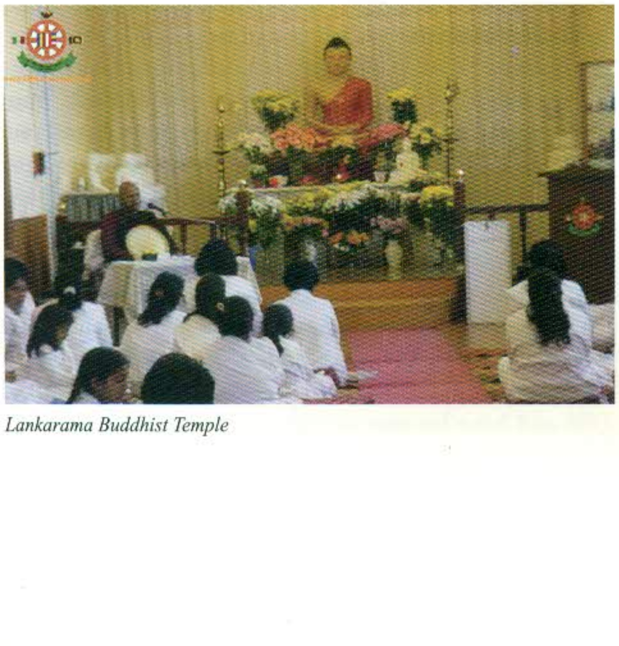
The tradition of the Kagyupa in Italy is less widespread in comparison to other European countries. A higher presence of Gelugpa in Italy is probably due to its more structured organization with hierarchical roles, rituals and structures that are close to the image of a Church in the local culture. There are different Kagyupa centers such as the Milarepa Center in Turin founded by Kalu Rimpoce, one of the main Tibetan lamas to have worked in the West at the request of Western disciples. He was able to transmit teachings clearly and directly to the point that he nominated Western practitioners, after a period of practice, as his successor. In such a school a specific retreat lasting about three years and three months was designed. The practitioners are taught various techniques, knowledge of the texts and of the rituals. At the end of such a period, some of these practitioners, according to the experience acquired and their abilities, are asked to be teachers and to transmit the tradition. Some Italians have followed this retreat in French and English centers and have returned to pursue the transmission in Italy.

Other Vajrayana traditions present in Italy are the Sakyapa with a small but active center in Trieste and the Dzog Chen tradition connected to the Nyingmapa school or the one of the elders, whose official center is in the Merigar Community. This was founded by Namkhai Norbu, who came to Italy at the beginning of the Sixties at the invitation of Giuseppe Tucci together with geshe Jampel Senghe, mentioned above. For about twenty years, Norbu taught the Tibetan language and culture at the University of Naples. Then he dedicated himself to the Dzog Chen practice, creating centers in Europe, America and Australia.

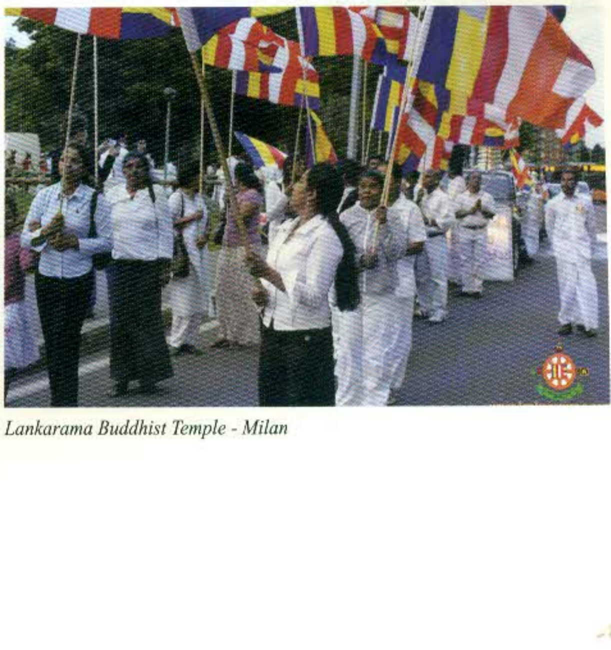
One of the pioneers in spreading Zen Soto in Europe, and Italy specifically, was Mokudo Taisen Deshimaru (1914-1982). He was a student of Kodo Sawaki, and upon the death of his teacher in 1967 he went to Paris. For the first few years he lived in difficult conditions at the back of a macrobiotics store, supporting himself by giving shiatsu massages. At the same time he started to teach zazen in the first temporary centers, travelling around Europe. He came to Italy in 1968, invited by the judo teacher Cesare Bariolim, and a small group of Italians began to follow him in France, where in 1979 Deshimaru succeeded in realizing his dream by founding the greatest Western Temple, la "Gendronière" around Blois on the Loire, still a center for Zen practice.

The work of Deshimaru as a missionary has brought about the birth, guided by his students, of different European centers. In Italy, such centers follow his teachings, such as the Italian Zen Soto Institute, a recognized religious organization whose headquarters are in Salsomaggiore, the Dojo Mokusho in Turin, the Dojo San Rin in Fossano and Shobogendo in Milan.

A wide-ranging monastery is the Italian Zen Soto Institute, founded in Milan in 1983 to promote and



Lankarama Buddhist Temple



Lankarama Buddhist Temple - Milan

support the spreading of Zen Soto from Taiten Guareschi, who was a direct disciple of Deshimaru. The centre of the Institute is in the Fudenji Temple near Salsomaggiore (Parma). Fudenji, meaning "Temple of Total Transmission of the Mountain of the Real Dharma" was the first Zen monastery established in Italy. The Fudenji practice follows traditional Zen rhythms, according to a daily program that alternates periods of zazen (meditation) and periods of study and work. Courses held are *Ikebana* (Japanese flower arrangement), *chado* (the tea ceremony), *shodo* (calligraphy), courses for the traditional sewing of the practitioner's *Kesa*, martial arts (judo, tai chi chuan), and shiatsu therapy. Taiten Guareschi also started courses on Buddhist theology, to supply a philosophical base for the practitioners at the center.

In Milan, Ensoji Il Cerchio, under the guidance of Tetsugen Serra, was connected to the lineage of Harada Daiun Sogaku Roshi. Also belonging to the same lineage is Samboji Monastery in Berceto in the Apennines, where it is possible to follow the monastic Zen rule and participate in retreats and seminars.

In the sphere of Zen there is also the Bodhidharma Center in Liguria connected to the Korean ch'an (seon) tradition and to the teacher Chinul, a contemporary of Dogen. A monk of Finnish origin, Tae Hye, who has been living in Italy for over twenty years and who follows various groups in different cities, resides at the monastery.

Founded and directed by Engaku Taino (Luigi Mario), a group following Lin-ci Ch'an, with its central headquarters in Scaramuccia (Orvieto), has been working at Zenshinji monastery since 1973. For seven years, Engaku Taino was a student of the Japanese Master Mumon Roshi, recognized as one of the greatest contemporary Zen teachers in the monastery of Shofukuji in Kobe of Rinzai tradition. Then Engaku Taino became his assistant for a year. Besides the sesshin practice, the Scaramuccia center features Alpinism, ski and tai chi chuan courses.

There are groups connected to the teachings of an important oriental teacher, the Vietnamese Thich Nath Hahn, who came to Europe to spread the Dharma. He became a monk of the Rinzai lineage at the age of sixteen and took an active part in nonviolent movements for peace after the wars in his country. He emigrated to France where he resides today (Plum Village) in the south near Bordeaux and started preaching Dharma in Europe and America. In Italy some groups follow his teaching and some of his students have founded a community in the central Apennines at the Island of Gran Sasso.

A perspective of Buddhism in Italy is certainly expanding. After the first settlement of the communities we are moving towards a more mature phase where projects concerning teachers', monks', and nuns' training, educating new generations, the children of the practitioners or elaborating new ways of approaching young people, are starting.[23]

In the course of the last ten years, UBI together with other religions has signed different agreements to constitute advisory boards and working tables with the local authorities in Rome, Naples, Turin, Milan, Trento, and Tuscany to work on the process of local integration, and it has actively participated in the elaboration of projects and strategies to intervene in the public sectors.[24]

Another important aspect is the interfaith dialogue in Italy where there is a long Catholic tradition; this is considered extremely important by the UBI and its associates.[25]

The Christian-Buddhist dialogue has been very active in recent years. There are direct relations with the Secretariat for Interfaith Dialogue, with the major universities and Papal institutions, and with different Catholic representatives. Even relations with all other faiths are encouraged that are full of stimuli, which translate into common activities, conferences, and projects.[26]

An important moment for the UBI is the annual celebration of Vesak, which joins Buddhist groups of every tradition in a meaningful moment of common practice. The United Nations Day of Vesak was instituted in 2000. Part of the Agreement text concerns the recognition of Vesak by the state, and the festival is celebrated in the centers according to tradition during the full moon of May, while in the last weekend of the month it is a common feast for all the members of the UBI who gather in a different city every May and organize conventions, meetings, celebrations and festivities involving Buddhists and non-Buddhists.

Another field in which the UBI operates concerns the protection of the religious rights of Buddhists from Asian countries who live in the country. Italy hasn't had colonies in the East, so only recently has it begun to have an Asian community attracted by the work possibilities, mostly in big cities. Today it has been calculated that the Asian residents of the Buddhist faith number 30,000, primarily coming from Sri Lanka, Thailand, and China. They present a new challenge for the state, which should guarantee them religious assistance. Since 2006, Buddhist communities from Sri Lanka have joined up with the UBI and have become a point of spiritual reference for their fellow compatriots, but also a meeting point with Italian Buddhists. Relationships with numerous Chinese Buddhist communities in Prato and in Rome are active. They have opened themselves to the Italian community, which is rather new for groups that generally keep to themselves.

The exchange relationship with Asian Buddhists has allowed a reciprocal enrichment and the creation of common celebrations of Vesak in Rome in 2005, in Padua in 2006, in Verona in 2008 and in Milan in 2010.

With the entrance of these communities into the UBI, supported by the original countries and by the commitment of the executive boards that followed, it is extremely important to guarantee Asian Buddhists that live in Italy their rights and support, mostly with rapport with the authorities and the encouragement of exchange with Italian practitioners.[27]

UBI has been officially acknowledged for twenty-five years, which admittedly is not a long time in the history of Buddhism, but these years certainly represent an important moment for an association of "young" Buddhists – young in practice if not in age – those that have believed that becoming part of this organization and working together is a good way to go make Buddhism come alive and present in Italy and to be grateful for the gift received. "The Gift of the Dharma exceeds any other Gift" (Dhammapada v. 354).

Two and a half thousand years after his death, humanity is still drawing inspiration, stimulus and hope from the ancient teachings of the Blessed Sakyamuni. Reaching Europe and taking on its own local identity, Buddhism has adopted new aspects that adapt to the diversity of Western practitioners. Buddha was a great pedagogue; he considered carefully who he was teaching so that the message arrived more directly and clearly. In the spread of Buddhism in Eastern countries, the religion has always communicated with different cultures it came into contact with, and in time it integrated with the social and cultural context of India, China, Korea, Japan and Tibet. Every population reached by Buddhism was enriched and every population enriched the Dharma with its own sensitivity. Now it's time for the West: Buddhists in Europe need to become European Buddhists.

The Dharma is spreading in different ways. There are some traditional isolated cases that follow the tradition in its most rigid form and do not integrate in the surrounding society. Yet they offer practitioners a safe ground where they can express themselves and find their own spiritual path. In other places a sort of Buddhist ecumenism is created where all the traditions are united to create a "European Buddhism." In both cases there is the need to find a balance between tradition and re-elaboration, between the need not to alter the core teaching and the improvement and enrichment that can happen with the religious and scientific encounters that exist in the West, and even from the meeting of different Buddhist experience. At the same time one can note how the ideas, practices and Buddhist imagination are spreading in "areas" of contemporary life; we may start meditation within a therapeutic program, through the purchase of a lap-top because it is also used by HH the Dalai Lama, or you can decorate your house in Zen style or go to a Buddha Bar. It is difficult to foresee where this standardized interest will take us.[28] In a certain way, the appeal that the West has toward Buddhism is part of the same cultural phenomena of globalization that has brought infatuation with yoga, tai chi, acupuncture or others coming from the desemantised East. Today it is difficult to say whether the presence of Buddhism in Italy is a transitory spiritual fashion or the beginning of a totally new development of thought in the practice of Dharma.

On the whole, Italy and Europe do not have their own Dharma tradition and are an ideal laboratory for an "inter-Buddhist" encounter. There is no background of disputes and diatribe among the various schools and so a Buddhism can be proposed that is connected to tradition but free from traditionalism. Perhaps this is the task Europe has. It is young from the Buddhist point of view but an "old" culture. It can create a new environment where the universal message of the Buddha can find unity and fullness in diversity and richness in its manifold traditions. "There is not only one Buddhism", says the Vietnamese teacher Thich Nath Hanh, "The Buddhist teachings are many. When Buddhism is introduced in a new culture, invariably there is a new form. I am convinced that the meeting between Buddhism and the West will really be interesting and it will produce something very important."[29]

Notes

1 A reminder that the birth of the Italian state is rather recent (1861) and only since 1870 can we actually speak about unification from the university studies point of view.

2 Matteo Ricci and Ippolito Desideri www.ippolitodesideri.net are examples of Italian missionaries in the East.

3 This monk was particularly interested in spreading Dharma among disadvantaged classes, like Ambedkar did in India, see magazine PARAMITA, 46 and 47, Rome 1993 and A Rawlinson, *The Book of Enlightened Masters*, Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1997, pp. 615–616

4 ISIAO, thanks to Tucci, promotes language and oriental culture, it supports scholars in Orientalist studies, if finances archaeological and ethnological

expeditions to the Orient.www.isiao.it.

5 Namkhai Norbu is a spiritual guide of different groups that operate in various parts of the world and under the Dzogchen tradition. Geshe Jampel Senghe was the founder and spiritual guide of the Samantabhadra in Rome until his death in 1981.

6 To read about the relations between psychology and meditation consult A Bonecchi, *Psicoterapia e meditazione*, Oscar Mondadori, Milano, 1991: there are about thirty articles collected from the magazine PARAMITA.

7 In his last work, *Ri-legature Buddhiste,* Edition Universitarie Romane: Rome 2010 R Venturini summarises his long career as a psychologist and practitioner, old and new reflections on the theme of Buddhist spirituality and its relationship with history of religions and trans-personal psychology.

8 Martinelli, an engineer, turned his own office into a pagoda at Pieve in Socana di Castel Focognano in the province of Arezzo. He placed a dome on the pagoda with mosaics depicting the series of The Twelve Rings from the Conditioned Production. The pagoda was left to an association and restored in 2011. It is still active as a Dharma Centre.

9 For the first Italian Soka Gakkai we can refer to Professor MI Macioti *Il Buddha che è in noi* ("The Buddha in us") Seam, Rome 1996, *Sutra del loto,* Guerini, Milan 2001, and then a more critical view of the movement in some of her articles on Critical Sociology n.141 of 2002 and in an essay in *Il buddhismo contemporaneo. Rappresentazioni, istituzioni, modernità* ("Contemporary Buddhism. Representations, Institutions, Modernity") by M. Senesi e F. Squarcini, SEF Florence 2006.

10 The oldest inter-Buddhist magazine was PARAMITA, *Quaderni di buddismo per la pratica e per il dialogo*, ("Buddhist notebooks for practice and dialogue") edited in 1981 in Rome by the Maitreya Foundation which changed name in 2000 to DHARMA, a Buddhist quarterly for practice and dialogue. DHARMA takes an interest in all the Buddhist traditions, with an encounter with Western culture and an interfaith one. It can be purchased by subscription, on the internet or in some specialized book shops. There are also periodicals such as SIDDHI, of Mahayana Buddhism from the Lama Tsong Kapa Institute of Pomaia (PI), SATI by the Association for Awareness Meditation (Aṃe.Co.) of Rome. Some centers publish internal newsletters regarding their own activities. There is also the publication *Buddismo* from the Soka Gakkai group.

11 Father M Zago gives an interesting and exhaustive classification of the various types of dialogues that one can have between Buddhism and Christianity: a doctrinal dialogue, experiential dialogue, one of cooperation, existential, representative, inner dialogue (*Buddhismo e cristianesimo in dialogo*, Città Nuova: Rome 1985, pp. 201-208).

12 Let us remember the activities in this field on the part of the Italian Foreign Ministry that has been organizing International seminars for the past two years (2009-2010 , in Trento, with the presence of exponents from various religions, philosophers and political scientists.

13 R Panikkar, *Il dialogo intrareligioso*, (Intrareligious dialogue) La Cittadella: Assisi, 1988.

14 Vincenzo Piga (1921-1998), Honorary President of UBI, has been one of the main protagonists of the creation of the Union. He was director and editor of the most ancient Italian magazine of Buddhist inspiration PARAMITA, *Quaderni di buddismo per la pratica e per il dialogo*, ("Buddhist notebooks for practice and dialogue") today *DHARMA* . Together with his wife Giuseppina he created the Maitreya Foundation, the only Italian Institute for Buddhist culture officially recognized since 1991.

15 The founding centres of UBI were: the Centre Ghe Pe Ling (Milan), the Mahayana International Institute (Pomaia), the Lama Tsong Khapa Institute (Pomaia), the Karma Tegsum Tashi Ling Centre (Verona), the Tek Ciok Sam Ling Institute (Belvedere Langhe), the Milarepa Centre (Pinerolo), the Karma Phun Tsok Dechen Ling (Brescia), the Maitreya Foundation and the Samantabhadra Institute (Rome).

16 The other UBI presidents were: Fausto Taiten Guareschi, Mario Thanavaro Proscia, Elsa Bianco, Maria Angela Falà, Raffaello Longo, Giorgio Raspa.

17 The European Buddhist Union has been working in this manner since 1975 and it gathers national unions of ten countries (Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Great Britain, Sweden, Norway, and Finland). Since 1987, different international associations like the FWBO (Friends of the Western Buddhist Order) or the FPMT (Foundation for the Preservation of Mahayana Tradition) and centers of eighteen European countries have joined. Italian Buddhist Union has been an EBU member since 1987.

18 The other Agreements signed with the Prodi government were with the Italian Orthodox Church, the Apostolic Church, the Italian Hindu Union, The Church of the Last Days, The Congregation of the Jehovah Witness besides two reviews of the Agreements with the Advents and Waldensians. These latter two were then transformed into law in 2009. The second time only mere technical changes were carried out: from lira into euro, and military service, were no longer obligatory so the article concerning conscientious objectors and the possibility to do civil service for Buddhists was technically cancelled.

19 The Sri Lankan Theravada centres of Modena, Verona, Milano and the Chinese Pagoda of Rome are part of UBI.

20 At the Oriental University of Naples, a partnership was established with Shanghai International Studies University, the Confucius Institute that promotes the knowledge of the Chinese language and culture, a point of reference between East and West, a place of collaboration and interaction with the Neapolitan institution both public and private. It works on the net with 210 other Confucius institutes present in sixty-four countries and it wants to be a means of exchange and collaboration among different civilizations, a factor of harmony among populations far away.

21 Lama Thubten Yeshe was born in Tibet in 1935. At the age of six he became part of the Monastic University of Sera in Tibet where he studied until 1959. This is how he describes this period: "In that year, the Chinese told us kindly that it was time we left Tibet to see the outside world." Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoce, as teacher and disciple in the period of their exile in India, meet their first Western students in 1965. In 1971 they established themselves in Kopan, a small town near Kathmandu in Nepal, and in 1974 the two lamas begin to travel and teach in the West. As a result we have the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition. Lama Yeshe died in 1984.

22 Ghesce Ciampa Ghiatso (1931-2007) was resident teacher at the Lama Tsong Khapa Institute for twenty-seven years. He entered the monastery as a child and at sixteen he had already begun academic studies of Buddhist philosophy at the Sera-Je Monastery where he met Lama Thubten Yesce and a long lasting friendship was born between them. At Sera-Je, Ciampa Ghiatso received the ordination of a novice monk and he perfected the study of some texts. Encouraged by his teacher, at the age of twenty-five he received the complete ordination. His life changed quickly in 1959 when due to the Chinese invasion he was forced to leave his country. The escape was very difficult and Ciampa Ghiatso arrived in India quite ill. He was released from hospital after a year and a half; he then took part in a Buddhist study program at the University of Varanasi (Benares). He excelled in classical studies and in 1972 received the title of Ghesce Lharampa. Once at the Gyume monastery he received an invitation letter from his old friend Lama Yesce, who encouraged him to go the West to teach Buddhadharma. In 1980, he transferred to Lama Tzong Khapa Institute of Pomaia as an abbot, teacher and spiritual guide. He passed away on November 27, 2007.

23 There are projects like the Master Program of FPMT, which has recently created a partnership with the University Sant'Anna Institute of Pisa, attended by students from different continents. To mention a few studies:

Course of Buddhist Study of Fudenji, the Santi Mahaa Sangha of the Dzog Chen community and the Universal Education Project that is working on elaborating teachings on Buddhist principles connected to young people's experience and the application of Buddhist teachings to reality as a concept of impermanence and interdependence, etc.

24 An example is the Interfaith Consul of the City of Rome and the Tuscany Region, the TOROC, Inter-faith Olympic Consul that was later transformed into the Table of Religions of the City of Turin, the Interfaith Table of the City of Rome and of the province of Rome, the Forum of Religions of Milan, the Table of Religions of Trento and so on, without forgetting the relationship with schools of every level and universities.

25 Relationship with the Catholic world is at an institutional level and study, as well as spiritual experience. There are exchanges of monastic experiences through the work of DIM, Intermonastic Dialogue, and the introduction of meditation practices of Buddhist tradition in Christian environment. The experience of the "Gospel and Zen" of Galgagnano in Lodi is interesting, for it showed how the Christian tradition with the Xaverian Father Luciano Mazzocchi and the Zen tradition with the Monk Giuseppe Jiso Forzani co-exist.

26 Interfaith projects for hospitals and prisons are active.

27 An example of this type of "integration" is the Santacittarama Monastery attended by Thai, Italian, Sri Lankas or the Lankaramaya Centre of Milan where groups go weekly to meditate and attend pujas.

28 The Cannes Film Festival of 2010 assigned the Golden Palm award to the film *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* by the Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul who often adopts Buddhist topics.

29 Thich Nath Hanh, Being Peace, Parallax Press Berkeley CA 1987 p.99.

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33 meter high stupa of Benalmadenz (Malaga)

ESSAY 32

Buddhism in Spain

Francisco Díez de Velasco

Introduction

Buddhism is currently the fourth minority religion in Spain after Islam, and Evangelical and Orthodox Christianity, in a country where the majority consider themselves Catholic (over 70%) or non religious (around 20%). Of the non Abrahamic religions, it is the one that has had most impact despite the recent introduction of practice groups in Spain (from 1977). Moreover, Spanish Buddhist assets are particularly remarkable and include enormous stupas, monasteries and retreats of significance. The Buddhist population is fast-growing and there are currently around 50,000 active followers at some three hundred centres or practice groups, despite the fact that Buddhism does not usually follow proselytising strategies in this country.

Spain and Buddhism: General Comments and Historical Background

There are four defining moments in the history of relations between Buddhism and the Spanish world:

1. The period of Imperial Spain when relations with Asia were important despite the primary focus on America in the interests of the state. Spanish missionaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries made contact with Buddhists in Japan and China, as well as in other places, and left written evidence of this.
2. The post-imperial period when relations between Spain and Asia declined significantly. Unlike the situation in other European countries where the development of colonial expansion in Asia led to a rise in Buddhist studies at university level, Spain practically ignored Asia in the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century.
3. The democratic period in Spain (from 1978), which coincided with the gradual growth of Buddhist groups in the country and which occurred almost at the same time (or with a slight delay) as events in most neighbouring European countries from where Buddhism principally filtered through to Spain. That time, particularly 1977, marks the true introduction of Buddhism into Spain.
4. The modern period, whose symbolically important landmark came in 2007 with the acknowledgement by the Spanish authorities that Buddhism was de *notorio arraigo* ("deeply or clearly rooted"), reflecting a greater institutionalization and development of all kinds of Buddhist religious options in Spain. The absence of prior noteworthy relations with Buddhist Asia has meant that the high numbers of immigrants flowing into Spain from the late 1990s until 2009 did not include many ethnic Buddhists. Buddhism in Spain is a religion of converts of either native Spaniards or Europeans who spend short periods or live permanently in Spain, and only a tiny elite of masters resident in Spain but originally from Asia.

During the two periods (prior to 1977-78) previously outlined Buddhism was not really visible in Spain. Over and above the possibility that at the time of the Cordovan caliphate or the subsequent Islamic kingdoms of al-Andalus information about this religion spread among erudites, the first effective contacts with Buddhism date from when the Spanish Empire ruled or had considerable influence over vast areas of Asia. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, several Spanish missionaries (Webb 1998: 363-366) when speaking of religions in Japan (such as the Jesuits Francisco Javier and particularly Cosme de Torres) or China (the Augustinian Juan González de Mendoza, the Jesuit Diego de Pantoja and the Dominican Domingo Fernández Navarrete) allude to various characteristics of Buddhism known to them, albeit with differing degrees of misrepresentation. The Japanese case is especially interesting because of the openness and admiration that the Spanish missionaries, who were the first to make inroads in that country, express with particular regard to Zen Buddhist monks (Cooper 1994; Lisón 2005). That said, these references had little impact and were unimportant in the metropolis where any religious divergence was persecuted by the Inquisition to a greater or lesser extent until the early nineteenth century.

Subsequently, and with the exception of brief moments of tolerance, all non-Catholic religious practice was very limited until the early 1970s, and generally speaking Buddhism was little more than an exotic reference in nineteenth and early twentieth century Spanish thought. Two examples can be found in Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo and Juan Valera. Menéndez Pelayo, who was the great scholar of non Catholic options in Spain (which, in his highly religio-centric analysis, he judged as heterodoxies), when alluding to Buddhism (Díez de Velasco 2011) evidently did so from a second-hand perspective, through stereotypes and reflections from other European authors of the time (with repeated references to Schopenhauer and Nietszche, although by way of criticism he does cite the case of a Spaniard who apparently converted to Buddhism). And the great writer Juan Valera, who lived most of his diplomatic career outside Spain, wrote about what he called "esoteric Buddhism" (Torres-Pou 2007) and did so in the same vein as Alfred P. Sinnet and the Theosophical Society. He clearly looked favourably upon this religion, which was not unusual among the many Spanish theosophists of that time. Francisco García Ayuso, the best Spanish Sanskritist of the time and controversial ultra-Catholic, was against this trend, which we might label "para-Buddhist" (a sympathetic feeling towards Buddhism as an atheistic philosophy or "esoteric" outlook). García Ayuso declared his opposition in a small book about Buddhist Nirvana (García Ayuso 1885) that he presented as a doctoral thesis and was the first work on Buddhism published by a Spanish author.

We should also consider Buddhism as an object of fascination clearly seen in several prominent Spanish authors. For example, in 1897, the famous writer Vicente Blasco Ibáñez published (from prison) a long and inspiring tale entitled El *despertar de Budha* ("The Awakening of the Buddha"). The text is solely dedicated to the life of Siddhartha from his birth to the beginning of his preaching in Bodhgaya, but the usual miraculous features of the story have been minimized. In 1918, a very young Federico García Lorca wrote a poem entitled Buddha (in which he named him "Tathagata" that masterfully describes the departure from the father's palace and the process of awakening. Buddhist influences can also be found in the works of various painters and artists, a fine example being Antoni Tàpies.

Furthermore, writings on Buddhism have been published in Spain since the late nineteenth century, increasing considerably at the end of the twentieth century. Today, Spanish is one of the world's leading languages and is widely published. Many Spanish publishing companies are almost exclusively dedicated to producing books on Buddhism (Dharma, Amara, Tharpa or Chabsöl) and others offer a wide range of works in this field (e.g., Kairós, Urano, Miraguano, Libros de la Liebre de Marzo, Kier, Paidós or Kailas). Numerous translations from English and other modern languages of books and texts about Buddhism are published in Spain (and also many are produced in Spanish by Latin American publishing companies). Far fewer are works or translations of Buddhist texts by Spanish scholars, whether academic in nature or from a Buddhist perspective by Spanish practitioners and Buddhist masters (particularly by Amadeo Solé-Leris, Dokusho Villalba, Jinpa Gyamtso, Isidro Gordi, Juan Manzanera, Aigo Castro or Denko Mesa), or by authors focussing on spirituality in Asia for whom Buddhism is one of their main areas of interest (such as Ramiro Calle and María Teresa Román). Also gaining in importance are works published in Spanish by Asian masters who have lived or currently live in Spain, including Dhiravamsa, Tempa Darguey, Tamding Gyatso or Lobsang Tsultrim.

It is important to bear in mind that post-Imperial Spain, now devoid of colonial interests in Buddhist countries in Asia, did not invest in equipping Spanish universities or research centres with any resources of note. This situation has virtually continued until now, since many Spanish academics that currently specialize in Buddhism or have done so in recent years, such as Amadeo Solé Leris, Raimón Panikkar, Joaquin Pérez Remón, Alfonso Verdú, Jesús López-Gay, Ramón Prats and Abraham Vélez, among others (Webb 1998: 366-371), have done their studies and researches outside Spain. In any case, newly-created official bodies are now beginning to change this panorama. For example, Casa Asia, founded in Barcelona in 2001, centralizes information about university programmes in Asian studies in Spain and supports some of them, though there are no specific studies in Buddhism to date. Young academic researchers in Buddhism, such as Juan Arnau and Ferrán Mestanza, are no longer required to go abroad in order to carry out their academic work.

To sum up, before the mid-1970s, only profiles of low-level practitioners could be found in Spain, which meant that Buddhism was practically invisible other than for sympathetic individuals, such as the founder of Sophrology, Alfonso Caycedo, whose interests lay in Tibetan culture (Caycedo 1971, 387ff.) or in the unstructured practice of foreign residents in Spain (for example, the early followers of Soka Gakkai-Nichiren Shoshu) and some Spaniards, many of whom had lived in Asia at some stage. In addition to several individual sympathizers, extremely difficult to detect for research purposes, and a small Catholic elite who were interested in Christianized Zen (including Carlos Castro Cubells, catholic priest and professor of History of Religions at the Pontifical University of Salamanca), the largest group comprised former hippies who had settled in Ibiza and the tourist areas along the Mediterranean coast and included Buddhist leanings and practices as part of the many other spiritual possibilities they dabbled with. It is worthwhile remembering that most long-standing practising members currently attending Spanish Buddhist centres initiated their journey in search of the inner self after being involved in the "psychedelic experiences" and counterculture utopias of the hippy movement (and the alternative forms of spirituality involved).

Buddhism in Democracy: The Plurality of Buddhisms and their Introduction into Spain

The first stable Buddhist groups appeared in late 1977, around the advent of democracy in Spain with a non-confessional Constitution (in 1978) and a law on religious freedom (in 1980) that permitted the free expression of religious practices and sensibilities including those as culturally diverse from the norm as was Buddhism in Spain at that time. 1977 saw the arrival of the first oriental masters and the creation of genuine groups and centres of Buddhist practice. Early that year, or perhaps at the end of 1976, the Zen dojo in Seville was founded by followers of Taisen Deshimaru (the oldest monk of this lineage is Reizan Shoten-Antonio Orellana, the founder). Though Deshimaru only visited Spain (Barcelona) once in 1981, to a greater or lesser extent many different groups of Zen practising members and centres are associated with him. 1977 saw the establishment of the Karma Kagyu Centre in Barcelona (today Samye Dzong) after the visit of Akong Rimpoche (the first of many he has made to this country). It was the beginning of the introduction of Kagyupa Tibetan Buddhism, whose notable presence in Spain was aided by the visits and efforts of Kalu Rimpoche (from 1983 until his death), now continued by his disciples. Thubten Yeshe and Zopa Rimpoche, lamas of the Gelugpa School also made their first visit to Ibiza in 1977. They promoted the network of Tibetan centres which would later be named Nagarjuna and which commenced their activities in 1978, dependent upon the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT). It is important to point out that the first prominent European *tulku* is a Spaniard, Osel Tenzin Rimpoche (Osel Hita Torres), precisely the reincarnation of Lama Thubten Yeshe who died in the USA in 1984. Osel was discovered in a family of Buddhists who managed the retreat centre Osel Ling in Bubión, Granada (Torres 1994; MacKenzie 1996; 1995: 160ff.) Acknowledged as *tulku* in 1986, he was educated at Tibetan centres in India and the West but when he came of age, he chose to follow studies less directly linked to the FPTM and the monastic training.

Two other outstanding moments in the maturing of Buddhism in Spain are the constitution of the Federación de Comunidades Budistas de España (FCBE), the Spanish Buddhist Federation, which has gradually grouped together an important number of the oldest and most widespread Buddhist groups, and the acknowledgment by the State in 2007 of the *notorio arraigo* ("deeply or clearly rooted nature" of Buddhism, which was successfully processed by the FCBE.

Generally speaking, from the outset until today, Zen and Tibetan Buddhism have had the highest number of centres, followers and activities in Spain; though other types of Buddhism have gradually emerged. To date there are around three hundred places of practice, including some twenty monasteries or retreats.

Zen Buddhism has three important platforms in Spain and numerous other independent groups. As for numbers of followers, each group, centre and dojo usually has between fifteen and forty habitual followers (as well as sporadic ones), though many more (several hundred) may gather at temples and specific ceremonies and practices of intensification such as retreats.

One extremely united and institutionalized collective, also a founder member of the FCBE from where the second chairman of the federation, Miguel Ángel Rodríguez Tarno (2004-2010), emerged is the Comunidad Budista Soto Zen (Soto Zen Buddhist Community) led by Dokusho Villalba (Francisco Fernández Villalba), a disciple of Deshimaru in France and of Shuyu Narita in Japan. This community has around ten practice centres, a temple (named "Luz Serena") in the province of Valencia (Spain), an audiovisual company (Alalba) and prepares training courses for priests and a regulated Buddhist study programme, coordinated by Denko (Francisco) Mesa, who has also participated in an interesting medical study on the influence of Zen meditation on the heart rate (Peresutti 2010).

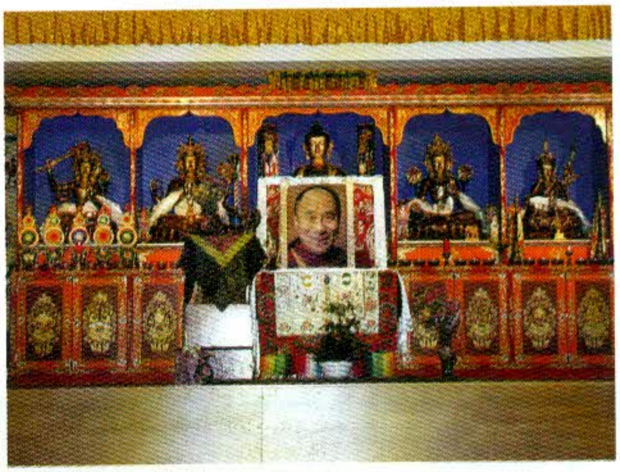
Another platform is that provided by AZI (Association Zen Internationale), founded by Deshimaru, which encompasses some twenty-five Soto Zen groups throughout Spain, all independent of each other. The Seikyuki-La Morejona Temple, near Seville, led by Raphael Doko Triet, is particularly notable, while other long-standing, highly active centres can also be found in Barcelona, Seville and the Basque Country. They have tended to create their own associations in the autonomous communities where they are well-established such as Catalonia Associació Zen de Catalunya (Zen Association of Catalonia) and Andalusia Asociación Zen de Andalucía (Zen Association of Andalusia).

Another platform that encompasses seventeen active groups in Spain is the sangha of the Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hahn. It has no retreat (followers go to Plum Village, in France, or use Catholic monasteries or centres ceded for this purpose) and does not usually have a structure of own centres, though the group is clearly growing in size.

In addition to these three platforms there are numerous other collectives and centres (more than twenty) of Zen-Ch'an) Buddhism. Most of them belong to Japanese Soto school, e.g. the group Tradición Buddhadharma del Zen Soto in Valencia, led by Aigo Castro (Pedro Castro Sánchez) and a member of the FCBE, the Mokushan Dojo, in Madrid, run by Barbara Kosen, and the Jiko An Centre in Granada, headed by Francis Chauvet, among others. Some other are followers of Japanese Rinzai (in particular the network of groups of the International Zen Institute in Spain) as well as Chinese (Chan Ssu Lun and also the centres of the Hsu Yun lineage) or Korean schools (Kwan Um School, which has several centres in Catalonia and the Balearics).

Versions of de-Buddhized Christian Zen, to a greater or lesser extent, have also made considerable headway in Spain, a country of strong Catholic spirituality. Carmen Monske is master of the Japanese Sambo Kyodan lineage in Madrid and Willigis Jäger also has groups of Spanish followers, mainly in the same city. An independent group of the Sambo Kyodan School is Zendo Betania, with a retreat in Brihuega (province of Guadalajara) and practice groups in Barcelona, Zaragoza, the Basque Country, east Spain and Andalusia. Led by Ana María Schlüter since 1976 when Master Hugo Enomiya-Lasalle made his first visit to Spain, this group is committed to spreading Christianized Zen in which, for example, a cross presides over the meditation hall alongside the customary Zen altar. The group also has a publishing house, Zendo Betania, which has produced a considerable number of works by Schlüter and an NGO, Zendo Betania-Karuna Foundation, which carries out projects in Central America and the Philippines. A subsequent step in the de-Buddhization of Zen is evident in Concha Quintana's dojo in Madrid. A disciple of Karlfried Graf Dürckheim, Quintana has removed all religious symbols (both Buddhist and Christian), and practice can be done with no religious reference whatsoever.

Tibetan Buddhism in Spain has a centre in Barcelona, the Casa del Tíbet (House of Tibet), which is essentially rime (ecumenical) in nature and run by Tibetan Lama Thubten Wangchen, who first came to Spain in 1981 and has been a Spanish citizen since 1998. The centre was inaugurated by the fourteenth Dalai Lama in December 1994, after the only initiation of Kalachakra that he has led in Spain, which took place in Barcelona before 3,000 people. In addition to encouraging actions to support Tibet, defend and promote Tibetan culture, sponsorship and other types of assistance among Tibetans, the centre also has two gompas ("rooms for worship"), one of which is particularly large.


Main Gompa of "Casa del Tibet", Barcelona

It has also been active in bringing the Dalai Lama to Spain on some six occasions since it was founded.

The Gelugpa School has created two large platforms in Spain, as well as several other independent centres. The oldest is the aforementioned Nagarjuna network (the official name is Comunidad para la Preservación de la Tradición Mahayana (Community for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition) that depends on the FPTM and has a publishing company (Ediciones Dharma), two retreat centres, six urban practice centres (in Madrid, Granada and the remainder along the Mediterranean coast from Barcelona to Murcia) and, since 1977, has encouraged many Buddhist masters to come to Spain either to teach or reside at the group's various venues. The best known retreat centre is the previously mentioned Osel Ling, located in the province of Granada, founded by Lama Yeshe and named and opened by the Dalai Lama himself on his first visit to Spain in 1982. The centre is a complex of constructions that respect local building techniques while including Tibetan features such as the stupa, the *gompa*, retreat caves and even a big bronze Tara statue, presiding over the whole. The other and the most recent is the Tushita Centre, located in Catalonia, in the province of Gerona. Dharma publishing house, with headquarters in Novelda (Alicante) and run by Xavier Alongina, is the most active and the oldest of the Spanish Buddhist publishing companies. Since 1992, it has produced over a hundred books, as well as *Cuadernos de Budismo*, now the only widely circulated journal in Spain since the disappearance of Dharma (published from 2005 to 2010). The Nagarjuna network is one of the founder communities of the FCBE whose first chairman (1990-2004), Antonio Mínguez, belonged to this group. It became part of the worldwide network founded by Lama Yeshe and managed by Lama Zopa (and, until a few years ago, by Lama Yeshe's *tulku*, Osel Tenzin Rimpoche) and develops projects in aid of Tibetan refugees, and an educational programme (Educación Universal) coordinated by Basili Llorca and Mariana Orozco.

The other Gelugpa platform comprises the Ganden Chöling network, led until his death in 2002 by Guese Tamding Gyatso, a prominent Tibetan master who lived in Spain from 1987 to 2001 when he was named abbot of the Gaden Shartse Monastery in India and whose work is being published in Spanish by another Buddhist publisher, Amara, headed by Isidro Gordi and located in Ciutadella, the Balearics. Since 2002, Gueshe Tenzing Tamding has presided over this group. In late 2009, the group's network of centres was integrated into a new federation named Federación Budista Mahayana Thubten Thinley (Thubten Thinley Mahayana Buddhist Federation). It includes eleven practice centres and a retreat centre (Cho Sup Tsang) in Orense (Galicia), and has created the Cho Sup Tsang Foundation to support the group's activities and provide aid to Tibetan refugees.

The Gelugpa School also encompasses other independent centres, two of which belong to the FCBE. The Tara Centre in Barcelona is led by Gueshe Lobsang Tsultrim. One of the first Buddhist masters to live in Spain, since his initial visit in 1981, he has carried out his work in the Nagarjuna network and then independently at this centre since 2004. Also in Madrid is the Thubten Dargye Ling Centre, headed by Gueshe Tsering Palden, who has lived in Spain since 2000, where he first participated in the Nagarjuna network and then founded this centre in 2003. The premises also house the headquarters of an NGO, Karuna-Dana, in aid of Tibet.

As we have seen, the Kagyupa School took root early on in Spain. Since 1992, three main platforms have disagreed about who they acknowledge as the head of the lineage. Two of the oldest groups in Spain belong to the worldwide network that recognizes Orgyen Trinley Dorje as the seventeenth Karmapa: the platform Samye Dzong, and all whose main centre in Spain is the Dag Sang Kagyu Monastery. The followers of the international network DiamondWay (DW), present in Spain since 1987, recognize Thinley Thaye Dorje as the seventeenth Karmapa.

The DW has been extremely active in their visibilization efforts, which include erecting the largest stupa outside Asia in Benalmadena, Malaga The thirty-three metre tall structure stands in a tourist area par excellence, with breathtaking views of the Mediterranean coast and even the African continent. In 2003, the year of its inauguration, 500,000 visitors flocked to the stupa, and numbers have subsequently exceeded 50,000 per year. This is an excellent example of current Buddhist religious tourism in Spain and of its future prospects (Perea and Díez de Velasco, 2011). The DW has also built an enormous worship hall to accommodate more than 2,000 people at their retreat centre, Karma Guen, in the province of Malaga (near Vélez-Málaga), where there is another smaller stupa (built in 1994), surrounded by retreat caves. For years, Karma Guen was the largest DW centre in Europe and was home to several projects including a Buddhist Studies Programme, hosted by the ITAS (Institute for Tibetan and Asian Studies) located at the centre. Floating exhibitions are also held and plans are in place for a future museum. The centre is equipped with a sizable library and every year around 4,000 people mostly from central Europe (Germany and Poland in particular) come to receive the teachings of the Karmapa Thinley Thaye Dorje (whose father lives at Karma Guen) or DW world leader (Ole Nydahl). In Spain, the DW network also has fifteen other practice centres and is certainly a large collective (over 500 active members and some 3,500 more sympathisers) and highly visible (Perea and Díez de Velasco, 2010).

33 metres high Stupa of Benalmádena (Málaga)

The Samye Dzong platform has its main centre in Barcelona. Founded in 1977 and is the oldest representative of Tibetan Buddhism in Spain. At present the platform coordinates another five centres including the Samye Dechi Ling, in Catalonia, a long-term retreat centre. In 2007, the traditional three-year retreat was concluded by the first group to do so in Spain. Samye Dzong, the founding institution of FCBE, is led by two Spanish lamas, a woman (Tsondru-Lourdes Clapés) and a man (Jinpa Gyamtso-Ángel Vidal Palet). In 2010 several members of the group participated (Jinpa Gyamtso also wrote the script) in Luis Miñarro's documentary, Blow Horn, filmed in India. Samye Dzong is also linked with the international NGO run by Akong Rimpoche, the Rokpa Foundation, which has eight centres in Spain and works on projects in aid of Tibet.

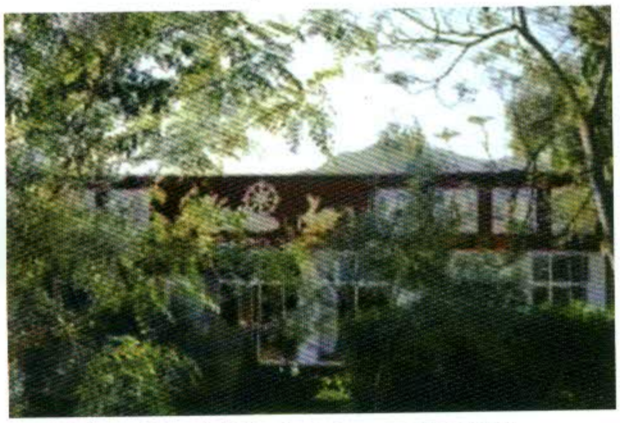
The third platform of the Kagyupa School is the network based at the Dag Shang Kagyu Monastery located in Panillo, in Huesca, in the Spanish Pyrenees. It was founded by Kalu Rimpoche in 1984 and has been named general headquarters for Europe of the Shangpa Kagyu lineage for the two-year period, 2010-2012. This impressive complex of Tibetan-style buildings and constructions (including a stupa, the first to be erected in Spain in 1912) houses a complete monastic school directed by Drubgyu Tempa, a naturalized Spaniard of Bhutanese origin with several resident lamas including a Spaniard, Djinpa (Borja de Arquer), author of several books on Tibetan Buddhism. It is also a centre that has welcomed a considerable number of Tibetan masters from different lineages and schools who have gone there to teach. The Dag Shang Kagyu network includes ten centres in Spain and a publishing company (Ediciones Chabsöl); it was a founding institution of the FCBE and one of its members, Florencio Serrano, is the current chairman (since 2010) of the federation. Círculo Niguma is also linked to Dag Shang Kagyu but in an independent network, led by Spanish Lama Tashi Lhamo (Isabel María Pérez de Hita), with groups in Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia, Salamanca, Seville and Tenerife. It also imparts learning in many other places and belongs to the FCBE.

Various other groups and centres of the Kagyupa School can also be found in Spain. For example, the Treloknath Ling Centre in the province of Gerona belongs to the Drikung Kagyu lineage, and the Drukpa lineage manages a centre in San Sebastian and a foundation in the Canary Islands mainly dedicated to assisting Tibetan refugees. In Navarre, there are two centres, the Karma Samten Ling, in Pamplona, and the Karmapa Mikyö Dorje, in Gulina (where two stupas have been erected, one of which is funerary), while Catalonia has the Karma Txöpel Centre in Vic. All three centres are attended by followers of Trinley Thaye Dorje.

The Sakyapa School of Tibetan Buddhism has had less impact in Spain than those mentioned above, though it does have important centres. The head of the school,

Sakya Trizin himself, inaugurated in 2006 what was then the largest European Buddhist centre, Sakya Drögon Ling, in Denia, on the Mediterranean coast of Alicante, in one of the most popular tourist resorts in Spain. It has a spacious *gompa* in a building that is an impressive architectural piece. It also combines modern construction techniques and respect for Tibetan symbology and design. For its part, Barcelona has the Sakya Gephel Ling Centre, officially opened in 2002 by Sakya Trizin, while Castellón is home to the Sakya Trinley Ling Centre.

Associated by name with the Sakya School is one of the networks of Buddhist centres that has had considerable impact in the Spanish media and whose headquarters are housed at the Sakya Tashi Ling (STL) Monastery, founded in 1996 and located in El Garraf Natural Park in the province of Barcelona. The STL network, which also belongs to the FCBE, includes several urban practice centres and another monastery in Castellón (in addition to various local practice groups). Outside Spain, it has a monastery in Cuzco, Peru, and centres in La Paz, Bolivia, and Lima, Peru. Also connected to the centre are the Sakya SOS Programme and the Prevain Foundation, which provide assistance to Tibetan refugees in particular, as well as managing an orphanage in Kathmandu, Nepal, and programmes in Peru. The STL network is led by Spanish Lama Jamyang Tashi Dorje (Francesc Padró López), some of whose initiatives have been highly successful in the media, including Buddhist music adapted to western arrangements (*Monjes budistas*, 2005, and *Live Mantra*, 2008) or a motorbike "tantric" helmet reputed to be protective (it included mantras inside).


Hotel Kadampa (Alhaurín, Málaga): piscine and meditation hall

Even more of a minority in Spain is the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism, though many of the teachings transmitted can be found in several of the aforementioned groups or those that will be seen below, such as Rigpa and Shambala. But the Nyingma Tersar Centre in Valencia (and another three associated groups in Catalonia), for instance, is purely Nyingma and is a member of the FCBE and also the Songtsen Centre of Barcelona.

Within Tibetan Buddhism, but not fully compliant with the four schools outlined above, are a considerable number of proposals that combine elements of several schools or lineages (an increasingly common practice), as occurs at the Padma Ling Centre in Barcelona (a not unusual blend of Kagyupa and Nyingmapa), or may propose options that seek adaptation to non Asian and current contexts of global Buddhism. Rigpa, the worldwide network led by Sogyal Rimpoche, who pays frequent visits to Spain, has gradually opened five active main centres in the country since 2000 (Barcelona, Valencia, Madrid, Tenerife and Vigo), in addition to four others groups (Palma, Alicante, Tarragona and Zaragoza), and continues to grow at a significant pace. The Shambala platform has a solid Tibetan Buddhist base but with a particular focus on meditation that reaches beyond only Buddhist proposals. This platform is part of the international network founded by Chögyam Trungpa and has eight centres in Spain. The Dzogchen Community can be said to follow along similar lines and is led by university professor and Tibetan master, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, who pays an annual visit to Spain. Its principal centre, Kundusling, was opened in Barcelona in 2007 and offers activities in ten other Spanish cities (particularly in Madrid). It is not essential to have a Buddhist or even a religious identity to become part of this group, a direction that sets a challenge for the future of Buddhism and that has also been detected when talking about Zen—the possibility of practising Zen or Dzogchen devoid of any Buddhist component.

Another Tibetan platform of considerable impact in Spain is the New Kadampa Tradition (NKT) whose world leader is Gueshe Kelsang Gyatso. The network headquarters in Spain are at Hotel Kadampa, located in the province of Malaga in an area mainly given over to tourism. The design is striking as the meditation hall is situated just five metres from the swimming pool (FIGURE 4), and also surrounded by bungalows and other services customarily found at a country hotel. The area opposite the reception is occupied by the Tharpa publishing company, which publishes the group leader's works in Spanish (around twenty books and an abundance of leaflets and audio books). This combination of hotel and meditation centre illustrates the adaptability of the group to western conventions, including leisure management, and provides another key to the rise of Buddhist religious tourism in Spain, a country whose principal industry is tourism. The NKT network has another fifteen main centres and another twenty-five small meditation groups.

Gompa of Sakya Drögon Ling (Denia, Alicante)

As well as Zen and Tibetan Buddhism, Spain also has several other representations (orientations, schools and lineages) that we shall next examine as a whole.

Theravada Buddhism, to which belongs the aforementioned notable Spanish scholar Amadeo Solé Leris (Asoka Dhammaviriya) has at present three leading platforms in Spain. The Dhamma Neru Retreat Centre in the province of Barcelona follows the vipassana meditation model of S.N. Goenka, with practice groups at twenty-five places around the country. In 2007, the Asociación Española de Meditación Vipassana (Spanish Association of Vipassana Meditation) was officially set up by followers of the Thai Master Bhuddhadasa who have a retreat centre near Madrid and practice groups active since 1990. The Asociación Española de Buddhismo Theravada (Spanish Association of Theravada Buddhism) was founded in 2008 and has practice groups in Madrid, Valencia, Zaragoza and Castellón and the Sri Lankan monk Bhante Pannasekara Thero has visited Spain as guest master of the group. Founded in 2010, the Dhamma Sati Retreat Centre, near Madrid, has been linked to this association.

Other vipassana meditation practice groups in the Basque Country, Zaragoza, Catalonia and the Canary Islands are associated with Dhiravamsa, a Thai master from the Theravada tradition who has taken Spanish nationality and has settled in the Canary Islands. He is also a prominent writer on Buddhist subjects. Dhiravamsa has been involved in the creation of the Arya Marga Sangha group in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, one of the most active in the Canaries.

Considerably influenced by the Theravada and Buddhist models that are related to the Pali Canon is another founding group of the FCBE, the Spanish branch of Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, known since

2010 as Comunidad Budista Triratna (Triratna Buddhist Community). The platform has three urban centres in Valencia, Barcelona and Villajoyosa (Alicante), three retreat centres, Guhyaloka in Sella (Alicante) for men, Akashavana in the province of Teruel for women and a mixed gender centre dedicated to the ecological values of Buddhism, Ecodharma, in Lerida. It attracts many practising members from outside Spain, particularly from the United Kingdom. In the past, the community ran a publishing company Fundación Tres Joyas (Three Jewels Foundation) that currently exists as an online Buddhist bookshop selling Buddhist publications in addition to numerous works that can be downloaded from the Internet, especially those by the group founder (Sangharakshita).

A group with numerous followers in Spain and a long history (since the early 1970s) is Soka Gakkai. This lay group follows a Buddhist model that does not include retreats and therefore has only urban practice centres. At present there are four large groups, bringing together several hundred followers in each (compared to an average of thirty-forty at most Buddhist centres in Spain) the headquarters located in Madrid, one group in Barcelona and two in the Canaries (in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and Santa Cruz de Tenerife). Within the framework of the FCBE, this collective is particularly active and has undertaken several initiatives, including an exhibition about the United Nations Earth Charter, aimed at opening up to society. The Nichiren Shoshu group has long been present in Spain (a temple in Madrid and a centre in Tenerife) and was associated with the former group until it broke away in 1994; they follow a more monastic way.

From what we have seen above, groups that become part of a Buddhist platform of a global nature whose profile is essentially international are not unusual in Spain. For example, the Jodo Shinshu group in Seville has close ties with Mexico where this Buddhist model has a notable implantation. Groups like the Buddha's Light International Association or the International Buddhist Progress Society (Spain), both based in Madrid, function to a certain extent like branches in Spain occasionally preparing the way for the implantation of models of Buddhism with strong components of ethnicity. Although the majority of Buddhists in Spain (except for some group leaders) are non Asian, since immigration to Spain from Buddhist countries has been minimal (with the exception of Chinese communities that do not necessarily practise Buddhism), Buddhist groups are beginning to emerge whose original members are mainly from Asia, especially China, such as the Zhen Fo Zong Ming Zhao Buddhist Community or the Amitabha Foundation, both located in Madrid. This is a growing trend in Spain, a country that is becoming increasingly globalized, pluri-cultural and multi-religious.

Buddhism in Spain: Challenges and the Future

Buddhism in Spain is facing a series of challenges that will signify the power of its social impact and its future development.

One such challenge is institutionalization. The tendency to fragment groups according to schools, lineages, masters and sensibilities, a distinguishing feature in the history of Buddhism, is enhanced in a country like Spain that also has a cultural tendency to separate into various identities, memberships and belonging. The actions of the FCBE have striven to overcome peculiarities and to promote a common platform of interests. In recent years this commitment to inclusiveness seems to be expanding as the federation opens up to collaboration agreements with diverse Buddhist groups from various sensibilities. This type of modus operandi of flexible membership and religious belonging has distinguished the Coordinadora Catalana d'Entitats Budistes (the coordinating body in Catalonia of all Buddhist groups) since it was founded in 2007. It is based on a model of inclusiveness that has many possibilities for future application in other autonomies of Spain to facilitate relations, meetings and synergies between different groups. A positive outcome of work coordinated by the FCBE was the aforementioned acknowledgment by the State in 2007 of Buddhism as a clearly or deeply rooted religion in Spain (Fernández Coronado 2009), which may lead to greater advantages in future, such as the signing of a cooperation agreement similar to that already in place since 1992 for Muslims, Jews and Evangelical Christians (or a comparable procedure). Sustaining a single, free-flowing and sufficiently supported discourse may succeed in the making the State adopt a more open attitude towards the particular needs of Spanish Buddhist groups (characterized by their diversity). An example by way of explanation is the question of the treatment given to the deceased and the likelihood of the authorities accepting a waiting period of three days before the body is handled (a matter of considerable import to many Buddhist groups). Institutions with Buddhist leanings whose aims are to promote these objectives are beginning to emerge (e.g., the Fundación Vivir un Buen Morir (Living a Good Death) located in Zaragoza) and though the efforts of the FCBE until now have not achieved a modification or relaxation of Spanish legislation in this regard, a future challenge is to do just that. If we extend this to numerous other issues, it is evident that, as the non-Abrahamic religion of most impact in Spain, Buddhism seems called to shoulder the burden of developing awareness, both among society and the authorities, of the nature of Spanish cultural ways, strongly confined within an interpretative context defined by a specific religious option, that must now adapt to the current, highly diverse global framework in which the significance of Asian sensibilities cannot be scorned.

Another challenge facing Buddhism in Spain is the irregularity of its geographical distribution. There are many Buddhist groups along the Mediterranean seaboard from Catalonia to Andalusia, in Madrid and in both the Balearic and Canary Islands. However, the presence of Buddhism in many inland and northern areas is limited to say the least. This is a weakness in the introduction of the religion to add to the snowball effect arising from the previously outlined growing importance of Buddhist religious tourism in certain parts of Spain, which usually seeks out attractive locations with a mild climate (primarily the coastal areas). Yet those who flock to these sites are not mainly Spanish Buddhists but people who generally come from northern Europe. In the long term this issue may become detrimental to the way Buddhism is introduced among the Spanish, since, rather than creating regular practice groups, as it might result in a kind of seasonal Buddhism in which Spaniards act as mere cogs in the wheels of a service industry (in this case for religion) for the enjoyment of others, and it may lead to Buddhism being associated mainly with foreigners and tourists.

Another challenge facing Spanish Buddhism has to do with leadership and is a common issue outside Asia. The legitimacy of masters, lamas, monks and other Buddhist authorities who are Spanish (or generally non Asian) is occasionally lower and sometimes questioned. The policy of acknowledgement continues to give priority to masters from Asia, which in the final analysis tends to uphold the stereotype of Buddhism being regarded as a foreign religion in Spain. The fact that *tulku Osel*, in whose person both worlds could skilfully coexist, has preferred to renounce to any management role in the FMPT does little to help this situation.

An important step when fomenting the social recognition and visibility of Buddhism is bound up with follower quantification and visibilization. The FCBE's internal data estimates that there are around 65,000 practising Buddhists in Spain and more strict statistical approaches (in the quantification of levels of practice and membership) propose around 25-30,000. We have already emphasized the fact that there are many groups that tend to constitute a diffuse kind of Buddhism with vague or multiple religious belonging. Moreover, there are a considerable number of sympathizers though their commitment to practice is not very constant (something which is also not unusual in Spanish Catholicism). To sum up, it might perhaps be necessary to multiply by four or more the possible number of Buddhists in Spain outlined above (in the FCBE estimations) if we want to accurately reflect these profiles of imprecise membership. We should take into account that the modern trend of concealing religious identity has perhaps had more of an impact among Buddhist sympathizers than other religious proposals, hence the need for FCBE and other coordinating committees in Spain to make Buddhism more visible. Moreover, it is a religion that has no stigma attached in Spain. Indeed, it could be said to have even a counter stigma, since there is a collective sympathy (or a fascination not far removed from what Francisco Javier or Cosme de Torres felt in the 16th century) that may determine a clear future direction in Spain, which would gradually lead to increased numerical support, social impact and visibilization (Diez de Velasco 2009).

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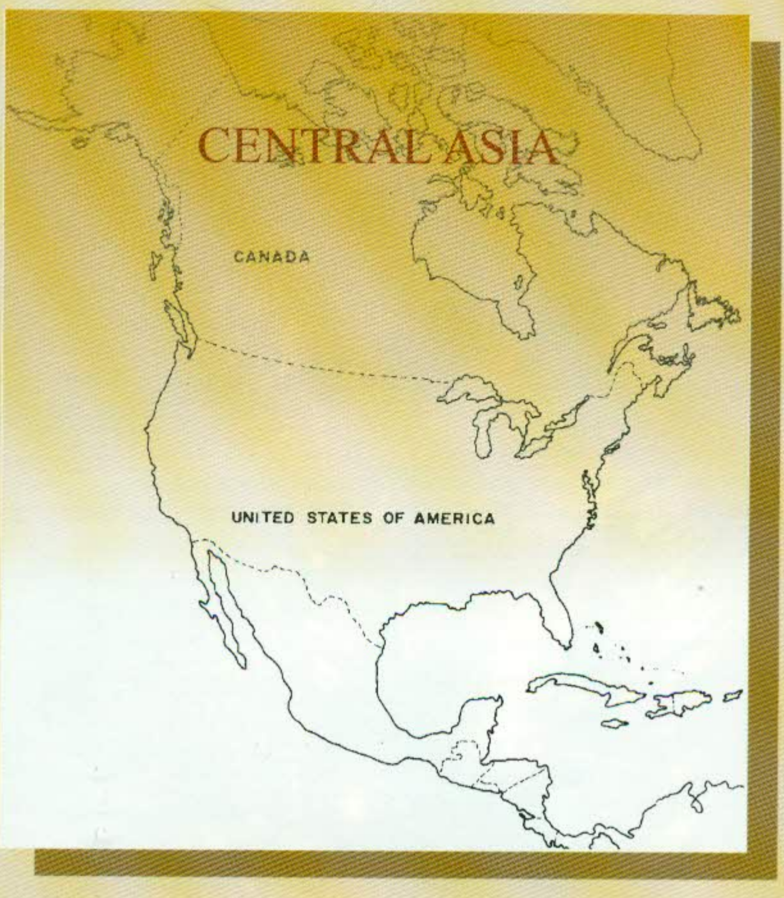


CENTRAL ASIA
CANADA
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

USA
and
Canada

ESSAY 33

Buddhism in America

Looking Forward, Looking Back

Charles S. Prebish

Introduction: Pre-1965 Buddhist History in America

Although it is rather common to refer to Oriental influences in the writings of such prominent American literary figures as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Walt Whitman, the more specifically Buddhist beginnings in America can be traced to the Chinese immigrants who began to appear on the West Coast in the 1840s. Prior to the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill, the number of Chinese immigrants was small, but with the news of the golden wealth in the land, the figure increased exponentially. Rick Fields has suggested that by 1852, 20,000 Chinese were present in California, and within a decade, nearly one-tenth of the California population was Chinese.[1] In the Chinese temples that dotted that California coastline, the religious practice was an eclectic blend of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, and although there were a number of Buddhist priests in residence, a distinctly Chinese Buddhism on the North American continent did not develop until much later.

The Japanese presence in America developed more slowly than the Chinese, but had much greater impact. By 1890, the Japanese population was barely 2,000. The World Parliament of Religion, however, held in conjunction with the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, radically changed the entire landscape for Japanese Buddhism in America. Among the participants at the parliament was Shaku Sōen. Sōen returned to America in 1905, lecturing in several cities, and establishing a basic ground for the entry of Zen. Upon his return to Japan in 1906, three of his students were selected to promote the Rinzai lineage in America.

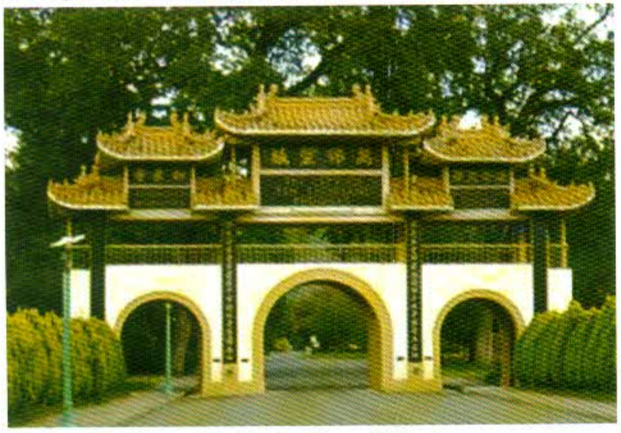
The first of Sōen's students, Nyōgen Senzaki, came to California in the first decade of the twentieth century, but delayed his teaching mission until 1922. Sōen's second disciple, Shaku Sōkatsu, lived in America from 1906-1908, and again from 1909-1910, but eventually returned to Japan without having made much impact. By far Sōen's most noted disciple, and the man who made the most impact on the early growth of Buddhism in America, was Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki. Suzuki worked for Open Court Publishing Company in LaSalle, Illinois, from 1897-1909, but returned to Japan to pursue a career in Buddhist Studies. He visited America again from 1936 until the beginning of World War II, and eventually returned for a final time from 1950-1958, lecturing frequently in American universities and cities.

Nonetheless, the Rinzai lineage was not the only one to develop in America. The Sōtō tradition (the other major branch of Japanese Zen) began to appear in America in the 1950s. By the mid-1950s, Soyu Matsuoka Rōshi had established the Chicago Buddhist Temple, and Shunryu Suzuki Rōshi arrived in San Francisco in 1959, founding the San Francisco Zen Center shortly thereafter. The Dharma successors to Suzuki Rōshi have continued the Sōtō lineage, while other teachers in this lineage, including female rōshis, have also appeared.

In addition to the traditional forms of Rinzai and Sōtō Zen, still another form of Zen appeared in America, one that attempts to harmonize the major doctrines and practices of each school into a unified whole. Proponents of this approach included Taizan Maezumi Rōshi (arriving in 1956), Hakuun Yasutani Rōshi (who visited the United States first in 1962, and who visited regularly until his death in 1973), and Philip Kapleau, an American by birth who first learned about Japanese religion and culture while serving as a court reporter in 1946 during the War Crimes Trials held in Tokyo. Maezumi Rōshi and Kapleau Rōshi have been enormously successful. Maezumi Rōshi established the Zen Center of Los Angeles, where he resided until his death in 1995. He left a dozen Dharma heirs, many of whom have developed their own vital, creative communities. Kapleau Rōshi too was quite successful, having built a stable Zen community in Rochester, New York, that was notable for its attempt to develop an American style for Zen practice. Also significant are Robert Aitken Rōshi, who founded the Diamond Sangha in Hawaii in 1959, Eidō Shimano Rōshi, who first came to the United States as a translator for Yasutani Rōshi, and Joshu Sasaki Rōshi, who founded the Cimarron Zen Center in Los Angeles in 1966 and the Mt. Baldy Zen Center five years later.

Zen was not the only Japanese Buddhist tradition to make an appearance in America before the turn of the twentieth century. In 1898, two Japanese missionaries, Shuei Sonoda and Kakuryo Nishijima, were sent to San Francisco to establish the Buddhist Mission of North America, an organization associated with a Pure Land school of Japanese Buddhism. Although seriously hampered by the Japanese Immigration Exclusion Act of 1924, by 1931, thirty-three main temples were active. With the outbreak of World War Two, more than 100,000 Japanese Americans (more than half of which were Buddhist and two-thirds American born) were relocated to internment camps. In 1944, the name Buddhist Mission of North America was changed to Buddhist Churches of America.

In the 1960s, another form of Japanese Buddhism appeared on the American landscape. It was known as Nichiren Shōshū of America, and by 1974 it boasted 258 chapters and over 200,000 members (although these figures were highly suspect). This group grew out of the Sōka Gakkai movement in Japan, a non-meditative form of Buddhism that based its teachings on the thirteenth century figure Nichiren (1222-1282) and his emphasis on the doctrines and practices focusing on or deriving from the famous *Lotus-sūtra*. Brought to this country by Masayasa Sadanaga (who changed his name to George Williams), the organization set up headquarters in Santa Monica, where it began an active program of proselytizing. Although the group has splintered, it remains a formidable Buddhist presence in America, having become extremely attractive among Euro-American and African American Buddhists.



The City of Ten Thousand Buddha in Talmage-California

Although not nearly so visible as the Japanese Buddhist groups, several Chinese Buddhist organizations have appeared in the last half-century. Perhaps the most notable of these is a largely monastic group originally known as the Sino-American Buddhist Association which, until his death, was under the direction of a venerable monk named Hsüan-Hua. Established in 1959, this organization developed a huge monastery in Talmadge, California known as the "City of Ten Thousand Buddhas," which serves as the headquarters of what is now identified as the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association. Of even larger size is the Hsi-Lai Temple outside Los Angeles, founded in 1978, and now offering a wide variety of Buddhist teachings and services. Other Chinese Buddhist groups can be found in virtually every major metropolitan area. The religious practice of the Chinese Buddhist groups in America is largely an eclectic combination of various Buddhist schools, combining Chan, Vinaya, Tiantai, Tantra, and Pure Land practices. Most of these practices are Mahayana-based, and a similar kind of approach is followed by the Vietnamese Buddhist groups that have begun to appear in urban areas as a result of a large influx of Vietnamese immigrants following the termination of the United States' involvement in Vietnam.

The Buddhist culture to enter America most recently is the Tibetan. Although a few Buddhist groups appeared in the West prior to 1960, the majority came after the Tibetan holocaust, during which the Communist Chinese made every effort to extinguish religion in Tibet. Following an immediate exile in India, Bhutan, Nepal, and Sikkim, the diaspora has widened, with many Tibetans seeking to re-establish their sacred lineages on American soil. Communities from each of the four major Tibetan sects can now be found in America, with those founded by Tarthang Tulku and Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche being especially popular and visible. The Tibetan groups are the most colorful of all the Buddhist groups now prospering in America, possessing a rich tradition of Buddhist art and a powerful psychological approach to mental health. They continue to grow rapidly, being very attractive to Euro-American Buddhists. It is no wonder, then, that they quote the thousand-year-old saying attributed to the sage Padmasambhava to explain their rapid growth: "When the iron bird flies, and horses run on wheels, the Tibetan people will be scattered like ants across the World, and the Dharma will come to the land of the Red Man."

washington Buddhist Vihara

The final sectarian tradition to be considered is that of the Theravada. Until quite recently, most Theravada groups in the United States were similar to the Buddhist Vihāra Society in Washington, D.C. In 1964, when the Most Venerable Madihe Pannaseeha Thera (the Maha Nayake of Sri Lanka) visited the United States, he noticed a serious interest in Buddhism on the part of many Americans, but a complete absence of groups in the Theravada tradition, and thus the idea for a Theravada group was born. The following year, on the suggestion of this esteemed monk, the Sasana Sevaka Society of Maharagama, Sri Lanka sent an emissary—the Venerable Bope Vinita from Vajirarama Temple (in Colombo)—to Washington. After Vinita's arrival in August 1965, he enlisted the assistance of the Ambassador of Sri Lanka (and his embassy staff), and on 10 December 1966, the Buddhist Vihara Society was found with Vinita as its president.

Now, however, as many Buddhists from Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Burma have migrated to the United States to escape the economic and political uncertainty of their native homes, there is a vigorous new infusion of Theravada Buddhism in America.

Influences on Buddhism's Post-1965 Growth in America

Following the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, the population of immigrants from Asia grew dramatically, as did the number of Buddhists flowing into America. As Wendy Cadge has pointed out,[2] the 1965 Immigration Act ended country-of-origin quotas, which led to both ethnic and religious diversification throughout America. In the decade of the 1960s, Buddhism was to experience the largest, fastest, and most dynamic growth spurt in its short history on the American scene. Its rapid rise presented Buddhism with as many potential liabilities as it did opportunities. In the first place, the undeclared war in Vietnam again focused continued awareness on Asia. As reports of pacifist Buddhist monks engaging in acts of self-immolation began to filter back to America in the media, a proliferation of books appeared, prepared by journalists, practitioners, and scholars alike. In academia, Buddhist Studies began to emerge as an independent discipline, usually embodied as an aspect of the many developing Area Studies Programs in American universities. The most notable of these was the Buddhist Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin. Shortly thereafter, other programs, initially at Columbia University, Harvard University, the University of Chicago, and the University of California at Berkeley, began to offer comprehensive training in Buddhist Studies.

In the social domain, the most significant development for Buddhism in America was the emergence of a considerable counterculture, from which Buddhism was to recruit some of its most ardent supporters. Theodore Roszak, in his influential book *The Making of a Counter Culture*, suggested that the counterculture was an exploration of the "politics of consciousness."[3] By the end of the decade of the 1960s, many Americans were associating consciousness awareness and expansion with the varieties of Buddhist meditation that were becoming prevalent on the American scene. The most immediate predecessors of the hippies were the "Beats" of the 1950s, and even Jack Kerouac himself conceded that the hippies were the descendants of the Beats. Thus the Beats had an enormous influence on the Buddhism that was developing on the American scene, and "Beat Zen," as it was called, became popular and contrary to the "Square Zen" of other popularizers like Alan Watts.

On the religious front, the entire religious situation in America was in turmoil. There was a continuous drop in church attendance, possibly indicative of a declining faith in the value of religion or its importance in an increasingly secular society. When Peter Berger argued that secularization created about a demonopolization of religious traditions eventually leading to a pluralistic situation, he was describing a religious "market situation" in which Buddhism was certain to thrive. Buddhism took advantage of the mitigation of its somewhat alien appearance by the religious fellowship inherent in the important ecumenical movement to gain new footholds in the American domain.[4] Thus by the end of the 1960s, there were more Buddhist groups, and with greater diversity, than ever existed before in America.

In spite of the above, Buddhism was still searching for a lifestyle consonant with its pursuits in America. There was virtually no monastic community or sangha present, and there were almost no Buddhist monks or nuns in residence. Thus Buddhist community meant *lay* community, and, to a large extent, *city* community. New American Buddhist communities of the 1960s and 1970s, however, faced other problems that proved difficult. Because Buddhist communities tended to define themselves more in terms of what they rejected than what they affirmed, a severe sense of ambiguity persisted, making it quite easy for new converts to withdraw from the sangha altogether or jump from one Buddhist community to another as "Dharma hoppers."

Up to this point, the Buddhist movement in America, and specifically Buddhist community life, had been a city movement. Nevertheless, in the 1970s a large number of Buddhists deserted the city and sought to practice their religion in a wilderness setting. Some of these practitioners simply rejected the evils and complexity of city life; others seemed to be motivated by a concern for the preservation of a sane ecological environment; and a goodly number were naïvely pursuing a "back to nature" way of life. Within a short while, and in decades to come, these practitioners mostly returned to urban life, having learned that Buddhism has always maintained that the best place to practice Buddhism is precisely *where you are*, and that the environment that needs tending is the *interior* environment.

Continuing Historical Development

By 1970, virtually the full extent of Asian Buddhist sects was represented in America, and there was a plethora of Asian Buddhist teachers in permanent residence in the growing number of American Buddhist centers. Dozens of *rōshis*, along with their Dharma-heirs, many Tibetan *tulkus*, Chinese monks and nuns, and an increasing number of Theravāda monks from various South and Southeast Asian cultures are now visibly active on American soil. The presence of a growing number of Asian Buddhist teachers in America has been complemented and augmented by regular visits from global Buddhist leaders such as the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh.

Further, these Asian Buddhist teachers, and the gradually increasing number of American Buddhist masters, have been able to establish an institutional foundation that is stable, solid, and even ecumenical in nature. In 1987 a conference on "World Buddhism in North America" was held at the University of Michigan during which a "Statement of Consensus"[5] was promulgated (a) to create the conditions necessary for tolerance and understanding among Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, (b) to initiate a dialogue among Buddhists in North America in order to further mutual understanding, growth in understanding, and cooperation, (c) to increase our sense of community by recognizing and understanding our differences as well as our common beliefs and practices, and (d) to cultivate thoughts and actions of friendliness towards others, whether they accept our beliefs or not, and in so doing approach the world as the proper field of Dharma, not as a sphere of conduct irreconcilable with the practice of Dharma. Geographically organized organizations, like the Sangha Council of Southern California, and associations of the students of famous Buddhist masters, such as the White Plum Asanga, linking the Dharma-heirs of Taizan Maezumi Rōshi, are now becoming commonplace in the American Buddhist movement.

The availability of accurate primary and secondary literature on Buddhism has expanded almost exponentially in the latter half of the twentieth century. Many of these publications now focus on the Western Buddhist tradition. Many pages of scholarly bibliographic sources on American Buddhism can be found in various sources.[6] The trade market publication of popular books on aspects of American Buddhism is even larger. As of 1994, nearly two dozen North American universities could boast at least two full-time faculty members devoted to the academic discipline of Buddhist Studies, and nearly 150 academic scholars of Buddhism were located on the North American continent, many of whom can best be identified as "scholar-practitioners." A decade later, each of these statistics has grown substantially. Moreover, the American Buddhist movement is aided by the presence of a growing number of individuals who have traveled to Asia for extensive training and then returned to the United States to share their approach with Americans. One of the most successful enterprises of this kind is the Insight Meditation Center in Barre, Massachusetts, initially guided by Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, Sharon Salzberg and Christina Feldman, each of whom received extensive *vipassanā* training in Asia.

It is now very common for university courses on Buddhism in North American universities to be taught by professors who, in addition to having sophisticated academic credentials in Buddhist Studies, also happen to be practicing Buddhists in one of the many rich and varied Buddhist traditions that have proliferated in the West as part of Buddhism's profound globalization, that is, the "scholar-practitioners" referred to above.

Not surprisingly, stories reflecting the study/practice dichotomy in Buddhism are abundant in both the primary and secondary literature on the subject. During the first century B.C.E., in response to a concern over the possible loss of the *Tripiṭaka* during a severe famine, a question arose: What is the basis of the "Teaching" (that is, *Sāsana*)—learning or practice? A clear difference of opinion resulted in the development of two groups: the Dhammakathikas, who claimed that learning was the basis of the *Sāsana*, and the Paṃsukūlikas, who argued for practice as the basis. The Dhammakathikas apparently won out. The two vocations described above came to be known as *gantha-dhura*, or the "vocation of books," and *vipassanā-dhura*, or the "vocation of meditation," with the *former* being regarded as the superior training (because surely meditation would not be possible if the teachings were lost). Moreover, not the least characteristic of these two divisions was that the *vipassanā-dhura* monks began to live in the forest, where they could best pursue their vocation undisturbed, while the *gantha-dhura* monks began to dwell in villages and towns. As such, the *gantha-dhura* monks began to play a significant role in Buddhist education. It would probably not be going too far in referring to the *gantha-dhura* monks as "scholar-monks." Why is this distinction so important? It is significant because the scholar-monks were responsible for the education of the laity; for cultivating "Buddhist literacy" among the ordinary practitioners of the tradition. While this was a normative practice in the ancient Buddhist tradition, Buddhism in the Western world has not favored a monastic lifestyle. As such, the education of the laity has been left to teachers who are no longer trained as scholar-monks. In fact, while many of the leaders and authorized teachers in the various Western Buddhist groups have had formal monastic and scholarly training at some point, many—if not most—have abandoned the monastic and scholarly lifestyle altogether. This fosters a "scholarship gap" in the global Buddhist community. To a large extent, this scholarship gap is rapidly being filled by the academic scholar-practitioners who, although not living as full-fledged monastics, have solid scholarly and academic training grounded in a rigorous personal practice.

Prior to 1975, there weren't very many places in North America where one could pursue graduate level academic training in Buddhist Studies, and get the solid grounding necessary to become an authentic scholar-practitioner. By 1995, when I conducted the second of two statistical surveys of Buddhist Studies scholars in North America, I was able to verify that one could do advanced work in Buddhist Studies at no less than 16 universities or colleges, and the anecdotal data supplied by my informants supported my suspicion that between one-quarter and one-half of the people whose teaching focused on Buddhist Studies were scholar-practitioners. Two years later, when Duncan Ryūken Williams published an article called "Where to Study?" in the Spring 1997 issue of *Tricycle*, he listed twenty-two universities with extensive resources in Buddhist Studies, including a special category of universities he called "Practitioner-Friendly Institutions."[7] Clearly, an "American School of Buddhist Studies" was obviously fermenting in the years after 1970, and it now rivals and perhaps even surpasses the earlier "Anglo-German," "Franco-Belgian," and "Leningrad" schools of Buddhology. Most obviously, this rapid development was fueled by the twin spires of the fast growing interest in Buddhism, generally, on the part of North Americans, and the establishment of the "Buddhism Section" of the American Academy of Religion as the chief academic venue for Buddhist Studies in North America.

At the very heart of this exciting development of North American Buddhist Studies was the role that scholar-practitioners were actively playing. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, some estimates placed the number of Buddhists in the United States as high as six million. There are currently more academic courses in the study of Buddhism than ever before, and with the huge explosion of well written and informative trade volumes published on virtually all aspects of Buddhism, a genuine "Buddhist literacy" has developed in North America . . . one that made it increasingly easier for scholar-practitioners to finally appear publicly and vocally.

Despite the above data, it still seems fair to suggest that the scholarship versus practice dichotomy persists to some degree. In North America, in the absence of the traditional "scholar-monks" so prevalent in Asia, it really does appear that the "scholar-practitioners" of today's North American universities are indeed *beginning* to fulfill the role of "quasi-monastics," or serve at least as treasure-troves of Buddhist literacy and information, functioning as guides through whom one's understanding of the Dharma may be sharpened, irrespective of whether it occurs in the university or practice center.

Quite apart from issues relating to the specificity with which American Buddhist life is manifested (lay versus monastic ideals; urban versus rural lifestyle), a distinct and unique application of Buddhist ethics, creatively called "socially engaged Buddhism," has emerged that demonstrated in dramatic fashion both the *active* and *optimistic* approach of today's American Buddhism. Organizations like the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, founded in 1978, aggressively demonstrate how to strike a careful balance between meditational training and political activism. Their task in bringing this activism and optimism to the American Buddhist public is aided by a strong new Buddhist journalism in America that has fostered exciting publications such as *Buddhadharma: The Practitioners Quarterly*, *Tricycle: The Buddhist Quarterly*, the *Shambhala Sun*, *Turning Wheel: Journal of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship*, and many publications of individual Buddhist centers. Additionally, the useful and productive development of the Internet has allowed American Buddhism to expand its sphere of influence to a *sangha* not necessarily limited to a given geographic space. The electronic *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, for example, in its "Global Resources for Buddhist Studies" component, has created links to literally hundreds of American Buddhist sanghas across the totality of North America, as has the resource of the Australian-based Buddha Dharma Education Association: www.buddhanet.net.

Equally, one cannot dismiss the role that the media has played in the development of the growing American Buddhist tradition. Most of this new public attention began with the decade of the 1990s. Between the months of June and November 1994, features on American Buddhism appeared in such popular print media as *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Newsweek*, *New York Magazine*, and *Christianity Today*. The *Newsweek* article, titled, "800,000 Hands Clapping,"[8] focused on a varied group of American Buddhists that included John Daido Loori, the abbot of Zen Mountain Monastery in upstate New York, well known actor Richard Gere, Mitchell Kapor of Lotus Development Corporation, Phil Jackson, coach of the world champion Chicago Bulls professional basketball team, and even The Beastie Boys rock group, who recorded "The Bodhisattva Vow," a rap tribute to the Buddhist path. *New York Magazine* went even farther, categorizing American Buddhists into "Beat Buddhists" (such as Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, Philip Whalen, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti), "Celluloid Buddhists" (including Willem Dafoe, Oliver Stone, and Ellen Burstyn, along with Gere), "Art Buddhists" (Milton Glaser, Robert Moscowitz, Roy Lichtenstein, and Robert Rauschenberg, among others), "Power Buddhists" (Jerry Brown), and "Benefit Buddhists" (like Porter McCray and Bokara Legendre).

Also in 1994, American Buddhism was presented as a major feature on the "ABC Nightly News with Peter Jennings," (with scholar-practitioners Robert Thurman and Charles Prebish serving as scholarly consultants) as well as on "Talk of the Nation" on National Public radio (with Helen Tworkov and Kenneth Tanaka fielding questions from a national audience). Peter Jennings's researchers estimated the American Buddhist population at that time to be between four and six million individuals, composed of both Asian American and Euro-American ethnic groups, making American Buddhism a religious movement significantly larger than many Protestant denominations.

The flurry of national media attention devoted to American Buddhism has continued almost non-stop since. And it's expanding. As a result, this virtually non-stop appearance of media stories related to the growth and development of the American Buddhist community begs for a careful delineation and discussion of the major issues that have shaped that very tradition.

Developmental Issues in American Buddhism

Outlining the historical details of the Buddhist movement in America tells but a small part of the story, for the growth of American Buddhism is far more than its history. Rather, it presents a struggle to acculturate and accommodate on the part of a religious tradition that initially appeared to be wholly foreign to the American mindset. It is important to realize that two different groups were primarily responsible for Buddhism's earliest growth in America. On the one hand, Buddhism is the native religion of a significant number of Asian immigrants. On the other hand, it became the religion, or at least the subject of serious personal interest, for an ever-increasing group of (mostly) Euro-Americans who embraced Buddhism primarily out of intellectual attraction and interest in spiritual practice. This latter circumstance has created its own Buddhist subculture that is literate, urban, upwardly mobile, perhaps even elite in its life orientation. The above bifurcation makes even the issue of Buddhist identity and membership a very murky problem, further exacerbated with confusion about various Buddhist positions on ethical issues, sexuality, gender roles, and the like. This developmental pattern, and the issues associated with it, needs to be explored.

In her 1976 volume *Buddhism in America*, Emma Layman devoted an entire chapter to the question "Who are the American Buddhists?"[10] She considered how many Buddhists there are in America, the geographic diffusion of Buddhism in America, the personal characteristics of Buddhists in America, their educational and occupational status, their "personality factors," American versus Asian Buddhists, and in the case of converts, their previous religious affiliation. What she did not consider was precisely how one determines who is an American Buddhist. Three years later, in *American Buddhism*, I suggested that one of the traditional ways of identifying Buddhists in Asian countries—taking refuge—was perhaps an insufficient and even misleading approach when applied to the American scene. My solution in 1979[11] was regarded as highly controversial at best, and obviously incorrect at worst. I suggested that if we define a Buddhist as someone who says "I am a Buddhist" when questioned about "his most important pursuit," we not only abandon our attachment to a ritual formulary (i.e. the three refuges) that is neither workable nor widely followed, but we also provide more than a modicum of freedom for the American Buddhist groups—a freedom in which they can develop a procedure that is consistent with their own self-image and mission . . . In other words, what appears initially as an outrageous definition of Buddhist affiliation serves the double purpose of providing a new standard and a simple method of professing Buddhist commitment while at the same time imposing a renewed sense of seriousness on all Buddhist groups. Over the past thirty years, this notion of "self-identification," as it has come to be known, has become the standard mode of verifying Buddhist identity in America. With the issue of "Who is a Buddhist?" clarified, five additional developmental issues frame American Buddhism since 1965: ethnicity, Buddhist practice, democratization, social engagement, and adaptation or acculturation.

The most recent debate about ethnicity in American Buddhism was precipitated by an editorial in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* in which Helen Tworkov wrote that most of the spokespeople for Buddhism in America have been almost exclusively well-educated Caucasians, while also suggesting that Asian American Buddhists, despite numbering over a million members, had not contributed significantly to the development of American Buddhism.[12] Her editorial provoked an angry letter of response from Ryo Imamura, an eighteenth-generation Jōdo Shinshū priest, but the letter never appeared in *Tricycle*, although it was later printed in its entirety elsewhere.[13]

In the aftermath of the above incident, many articles appeared in the popular and scholarly literature addressing the issues of how to speak of the different kinds of Buddhism alluded to above. These articles seem to fall into two camps. The first of these camps emerged in response to and support of my article "Two Buddhisms Reconsidered."[14] I had originally coined the phrase "two Buddhisms" in 1979 to delineate one form of Buddhism that places primary emphasis on sound basic doctrines, shared by all Buddhists, and on solid religious practice, from another which seemed to emerge shortly after radical social movements. At that time, I considered the former group conservative and stable, while I characterized the latter as flashy, opaquely exotic, and hip. In "Two Buddhisms Reconsidered," I redefined the former group as representing the Buddhism practiced by essentially Asian American communities. My intention was to find a way for Asian American immigrant Buddhists and American Buddhist converts (mostly, but not exclusively of European American descent) to find a respectful and mutually enhancing way of relating, and to find a way for scholars interested in studying these communities to properly and accurately refer to the communities. I went on to suggest that while generalizations about American Buddhism are probably either impossible or foolish, we might reconsider these "two Buddhisms" in a way that not only added other critical issues into the mix, but also moved beyond the limits of a perhaps restrictive twofold typology. To do that, I utilized Peter Williams' recent book *American Religions: Traditions and Cultures*. Williams identified three categories to describe the way Asian religions impact on America: (1) "ethnic religions" practiced by Asian immigrants and, to an extent, by their descendants; (2) "export religions," popular among well-educated, generally intellectual Americans; and (3) "new religions," developing in consonance with the process outlined by Jacob Needleman and others, often as revolutionary outgrowths of religions cited in the first two categories.[15]

Shortly thereafter, Jan Nattier published an article in *Tricycle that* was very explicit and sophisticated in her approach to the varieties of Buddhism in America, and she developed the argument more thoroughly in "Who is Buddhist? Charting the Landscape of Buddhist America."[16] Nattier postulated a threefold typology explaining how religions move into new locations and cultures, consisting of (in her characterization):

1. Import religion - a "demand-driven transmission" in which a religion is sought out in an active fashion by the recipient. With specificity for Buddhism, this is labeled "Elite Buddhism."
2. Export religion - a missionary-driven transmission, in which individuals encounter Buddhism through the proselytizing effort of a particular Buddhist group. With specificity for Buddhism, this is labeled "Evangelical Buddhism."
3. Baggage religion - the religion of immigrants to North America, but whose motivation for travel was not evangelical. With specificity for Buddhism, this is labeled "Ethnic Buddhism."

The typology conflict between "two Buddhisms" or "three Buddhisms" persisted until Paul Numrich offered a reasonable alternative. His labels identify "Asian immigrants" and "American converts" as the basic two groups in American Buddhism.[17] Further research by other scholars has offered additional subdivisions within these two groups, but this distinction has continued to be useful. Additionally, we will see at the end of this article that more emphasis has now been placed on "hybridity" as perhaps the newest typology for understanding groups within American Buddhism.

There is no disagreement among researchers that Asian immigrant Buddhist communities and American convert communities engage in significantly different expressions of Buddhist practice. The general consensus is that American converts gravitate toward the various meditation traditions, while Asian immigrants maintain practices coincident with ritual activity or Pure Land observance, depending on the nature of the parent tradition of their community. With the exception of those American converts who have taken up the practices of

Sōka Gakkai, there is an almost completely exclusive focus upon meditative practices. More than a few observers of the American Buddhist tradition have remarked that American converts treat Buddhism as if it was a "one-fold path," focusing only on meditation and little, if anything, else. In a very real sense, the meditation tradition in America continues to be seen as an all-pervasive activity, offering a complete solution to the entire spectrum of life's ills, from getting high without the risks of drugs to finding a way to cultivate peace. It would not be going too far, I think, to suggest that Buddhist meditation, and the tradition associated with it, has become its own subculture; and it is a subculture that has spawned an enormous popular literature.

Yet Buddha spoke of a three-fold training that includes not simply spiritual practice, but also the ethical training which supports it, and the wisdom that emerges from it. Most often the ethical training is described in terms of the practice of precepts or *śikṣā*. This is significant because precepts are not practiced in a specific, temporally defined portion of one's day. Properly observed, precepts apply to the totality of one's experience. They infuse our lives in every moment. Thus, in the broadest sense, precepts *are* practice in a far more comprehensive fashion than any single spiritual endeavor. Stephen Batchelor is one of the few scholar-practitioners who has come to identify the application of ethics and spiritual practice as interpenetrating, complementary factors. He argues that ethics include values and precepts that impact one's practice significantly.[18] The problem, in general terms, is how Buddhist ethical guidelines can be applied to daily life; and in specific terms, what adaptations must be made to accommodate the experience of Buddhist life in the West.

To sum up: If the American Buddhist tradition is to affirm the suggestion of Batchelor and others that precepts are an integral aspect of Buddhist practice, and of a Buddhist lifestyle that fosters awareness of and respect for all living beings, then a new and modern ethical literature must necessarily be created. However, if that literature is to meaningfully address the conflicts and ambiguities that result from colliding with a modern world that the earliest tradition never imagined, and engaging that confrontation in a fashion that is truly transcultural and transnational, then it is essential for that new literature to reflect an American Buddhist ethics that is both current and textually supported.

While Asian Buddhism was, for the most part, primarily hierarchical and highly authoritarian, the forms of American Buddhism that are currently developing are clearly undergoing a process of democratization. Unfortunately, and perhaps ironically, this democratization was hastened by a series of scandals that rocked many American Buddhist communities. In an interesting *Time* magazine article about the collective American Buddhist community, David Van Biema noted that many American Buddhist teachers, both Asian and American, had abused their positions by having sexual relations with their disciples.[19] He argued that this circumstance led to an aggressive democratization in many Buddhist communities in which leadership was administratively adjusted so as to prevent further abuse. This radical democratization is being manifested in three essential aspects of American Buddhist communities. First, it can be observed in changing patterns of authority in the various Buddhist sanghas, highlighted by a re-evaluation of the nature of the relationship between the monastic and lay communities. Second, democratization can be witnessed in changing gender roles in American Buddhism, and especially in the prominence of women. Finally, it can be seen in the manner in which individuals pursuing a non-traditional lifestyle, particularly with regard to sexual preferences, are finding a meaningful role in American Buddhist communities. As a result of this process of democratization, American Buddhism has been able to move away from the hierarchical pattern of Asian Buddhism to the pursuit of an egalitarian approach that is more consistent with American democratic trends.

Studies of the Buddhist monastic tradition in various Asian countries are too plentiful to mention, but nearly all of the books and articles reveal the importance of the monastic unit for the surrounding community and the degree to which its monks and nuns were venerated for their effort, and often, for their erudition. In other words, the ideal lifestyle for Buddhist practitioners was that of the monastic. In the United States, however, the monastic lifestyle has never been the ideal. Thus Buddhist community meant *lay* community, and, to a large extent, *city* community. One of the most popular and successful attempts to find a workable alternative to the traditional lay/monastic bifurcation was put into practice at the Zen Center of Los Angeles in which many serious students of Taizan Maezumi Rōshi lived in an intermediate lifestyle, marrying and holding outside jobs while negotiating the full course of training incumbent on a Zen monk. As the Dharma-heirs of Maezumi Rōshi moved on to begin forming their own Zen communities, many of them have utilized this pattern with much success. In the Theravadin tradition, a similar approach has been identified, noting that a number of lay disciples have taken ordination as an *anagārika*, a celibate path about mid-way between the traditional lay and monastic sanghas. Until quite recently, the problem of Buddhist lifestyle and changing patterns of authority was exacerbated by the fact that, unlike its Asian counterpart, American Buddhism was a city movement. The early pattern for American Buddhist communities was to first establish a city center, and then as the center grew and became stable, to develop satellite country centers. To some extent, the members of many infant American Buddhist city centers communicated more effectively with city-centered members of *other Buddhist sectarian groups* than with country-centered members of *their own community*. Now this is no longer true. The general explosion of information exchange technology, and the widespread accessibility of the Internet, have changed the shape of how and where American Buddhist communities define themselves and engage in Buddhist practice.

Stories about the Buddha's reluctance to begin an order of nuns are legion in the scholarly literature devoted to the development of the early sangha. Although it was pointed out earlier that the monastic tradition represents only a tiny portion of American Buddhist communities, many American Buddhist women see the role of nuns as instrumental in cultivating gender equality in American Buddhism. The degree to which male Buddhist practitioners and teachers welcome such women remains the challenge of changing gender roles in American Buddhism. The growing community of female teachers is significant in that it bridges the gap between the small sangha*s* of monastic members and the overwhelmingly larger number of female lay practitioners in American Buddhism.

Amidst the huge variety of lifestyle choices available in modern America, none are more visible than the non-traditional, alternative sexual preferences of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people. Not long ago, Roger Corless's "Coming Out in the *Sangha*: Queer Community in American Buddhism" creatively explored the existing material, finding scriptural references where he could. He pointed out that since the *Vinaya* precepts largely assumed heterosexuality, both homosexuality and homoeroticism were basically ignored. Corless pointed out that now a number of Buddhist groups have emerged that support gay, lesbian, and bisexual Buddhists. In trying to isolate the motives and characteristics of queer Buddhist groups, Corless extracted points from the mission statement of one of these groups, concluding that the main issues include: (1) creating a safe environment in which to practice; (2) creating an environment in which practitioners of various Buddhist paths can meet, share viewpoints, and be mutually supportive; (3) providing a community that is socially and psychologically supportive; (4) offering compassion through social action; and (5) offering a place to explore the degree to which Buddhism does, or does not, meet their spiritual needs.[20]

Perhaps the one issue that dominated the early comprehensive books on American Buddhism was *adaptation*, or as it is sometimes referred to, acculturation or Americanization. The underlying issue is questioning whether we were witnessing Asian Buddhism transplanted onto (but not necessarily into) American soil, or whether we have a new cultural amalgam that we should properly identify as "American Buddhism." During the fall of 1994, the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley sponsored an ongoing lecture series entitled "Buddhisms in America: An Expanding Frontier." Most of the papers from this series were collected into the book that was eventually called *The Faces of Buddhism in America*. Why was there a switch in title on the path from conference to book? Presumably, it was more effective to present American Buddhism as one whole with many faces than many American Buddhisms celebrating their diversity together. In his treatment of adaptation in the Epilogue to *The Faces of Buddhism in America*, Kenneth Tanaka acknowledged that in some cases the qualities of American individualism and secularism can give rise to a sense of impatience with, and possibly even arrogance toward ancient forms of Buddhism. Nonetheless, he tried to interpret this inclination in a positive way. In so doing, he suggested that the urgency for aggressive adaptation has fostered what he calls "diffuse affiliation" and "eclectic tendencies" in American Buddhism. Diffuse affiliation suggests that individuals may have association with a variety of Buddhist forms in their religious quest. As such, not only may the current affiliation of an individual not necessarily be their final affiliation, but an individual may also maintain concurrent affiliation with more than one Buddhist organization. Diffuse affiliation is also witnessed among American *Dharma* teachers who have received training authorization in more than one tradition. The most publicized expression of diffuse affiliation, as Tanaka pointed out, is Rodger Kamenetz's book *The Jew in the Lotus*, in which he coined the term "JUBU" for referring to individuals holding a Jewish-Buddhist dual affiliation. Eclectic tendencies refer to such accommodations as Seung Sahn's blending of Zen with Korean folk Buddhism, or in a more extreme example, the practice of some *vipassanā* teachers to claim no association with the Theravada tradition or even with Buddhism.[21]

We have seen that American Buddhism has grown within a developmental framework in which the serious issues of ethnicity, practice, democratization, engagement, and adaptation have necessitated a careful self-examination on the part of individual Buddhist communities. Resulting from that self-reflection is the generally accepted notion than an internal American Buddhist ecumenicity is now required for the continued harmonious growth of the tradition on American soil. Thus, as noted above, the "Conference on World Buddhism in North America" was sponsored by the Zen Lotus Society in Ann Arbor, Michigan on 10-17 July 1987. Conceived by Ven. Samu Sunim, and with ample assistance from Professor Luis Gómez (who served as co-coordinator), a wide variety of talks, panel discussions, and meetings were held in an effort to bring together representatives of the Buddhist traditions in America to work together toward common goals. As also noted above, the conference developed a carefully conceived "Statement of Consensus" for implementation. More than twenty years later, Lama Surya Das, who was closing speaker at the "Buddhism in America Conference" held in Boston on 17-19 January 1997, emphasized that American Buddhism must be ecumenical in the future. The underlying assumption seems to be the hope that an ecumenical attitude, implemented in the proper way, will function as a protective umbrella under which the issues of ethnicity, practice, democratization, engagement, and adaptation may be addressed in a constructive and productive fashion.

Technology and the *Cybersangha*

In the earliest general, comprehensive books on Buddhism in America, not a single word was written about the role of computer technology in the development of American Buddhism. The earliest formal interest in the application of computer technology to Buddhism seems to have occurred when the International Association of Buddhist Studies formed a "Committee on Buddhist Studies and Computers" at its 1983 meeting in Tokyo.

Early in the 1990s, a profusion of online discussion forums (or "e-mail discussion lists") began to proliferate and thrive on the Internet. Although these forums were global in scope, the vast majority of subscribers and participants were from North America. Now these discussion forums are too numerous to list, and many are sponsored by individual American Buddhist sanghas as a means to maintain continuous, ongoing communication among community members irrespective of where they may reside. New terminology developed to capture the essence and function of these computer-based means of communication. One of the earliest pioneers of Buddhist online communication, Gary Ray, coined the catchy phrase "*cybersangha*" in 1991 to depict the bevy of online communities that were appearing. With the creation and expansion of the World Wide Web (or WWW), and the increasingly sophisticated technology that has accompanied it, there seems no limit to the expansive means of communication available to American Buddhists. Many, if not most, American Buddhist communities now have individual web sites on the World Wide Web, informing members of various aspects of the community's functions, but also serving as clever advertising occasions for new potential members.

At the far extreme of the technological revolution are an increasing number of Buddhist communities that exist *only* in cyberspace, with no geographic component in real space. Some of these *cybersanghas* have had real impact for individuals who are geographically isolated from communities that exist in real space. On the one hand, it is possible to see technology and the *cybersangha* as the completion of the traditional Buddhist "sangha of the four quarters." On the other hand, it is possible to see this new development in American Buddhist communication as a true sign of the cold, rational, contemporary world in which communication is faceless and even impersonal.

The Future of American Buddhism

On 17-19 January 1997 a "Buddhism in America Conference" was held at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel. The promotional brochure distributed by the conference's producer, Al Rapaport, subtitled the event: "A Landmark Conference on the Future of Buddhist Meditative Practices in the West." In addition to the various keynote addresses, pre-conference workshops, and panels, there was a cornucopia of American Buddhist activities available for all to experience. Throughout the weekend, the Drepung Loseling Tibetan monks were creating a Medicine Buddha Sand Mandala, and on Saturday evening, nine lamas from the Drepung Loseling monastery performed their world-famous multiphonic singing. There were almost two dozen commercial exhibitors, consisting of booksellers, distributors of Dharma-ware, and other Buddhist items. On the last night of the conference, Lama Surya Das, an American convert Buddhist (originally born as Jeffrey Miller) and founder of the Dzogchen Foundation in Cambridge, Massachusetts gave the final presentation. He offered ten points which he believed would characterize the American Buddhism of the future. These included:

1. Dharma without dogma. Like other speakers before him (most notably Stephen Batchelor), he argued for a "Buddhism without belief."
2. A lay-oriented sangha. He acknowledged and supported

the notion of *three* communities in American Buddhism: the traditional monastic sangha, the lay sangha, and what he referred to as "the in-between sangha," with the latter reflecting the attempts by many men and women to maintain a monastic-oriented lifestyle while maintaining traditional family life.

3. A meditation-based and experiential tradition. He contrasted this feature against a study-based or academic Buddhism. There was no mention of non-meditational practices, such as those utilized by the Pure Land tradition, or by Sōka Gakkai.
4. Gender equality. Surya Das noted that half of the Buddhist teachers in the West are women, and that the American Dharma needed to be an equal-opportunity enterprise.
5. A non-sectarian tradition. Surya Das stressed that the developing American Buddhism of the next century must be eclectic, ecumenical, and utterly equal.
6. An essentialized and simplified tradition. Here he maintained that American Buddhism needed to be "de-mystified," and bypass technical jargon and foreign terminology. In reshaping the Dharma for the West, however, he also underscored the avoidance of "New Age" and pop psychology.
7. An egalitarian, democratic, and non-hierarchical tradition. The chief emphasis in this point was Surya Das' insistence that American Buddhism not be class-oriented or theocratic. He argued for supporting non-institutionalized forms of American Buddhism.
8. A psychologically astute and rational tradition. Perhaps in an attempt to expand and clarify point 3 above, he restated his insistence on a practice-based American Buddhism, but here included faith and devotional practices as well. But, he also argued for the tradition to be skeptical, practical, and acquiring. Nonetheless, he concluded this point by advocating self-help as a primary aspect of American Buddhism.
9. An experimental, innovating, inquiry-based tradition. Surya Das wants American Buddhism to be forward looking rather than preservationist. He argued aggressively against preserving old wine in new bottles. Of special interest was his observation that we are now experiencing the "third wave" of teachers: Western teachers trained by *Western teachers*.
10. A socially informed and engaged tradition. As his final point, he accentuated an integrative rather than reclusive American Buddhism in which family life was included as part of the spiritual path. He further indicated the importance of hospice work, ethics and right livelihood, deep ecology, the performing arts, sports, social service, and interfaith dialogue as critical features of the socially engaged Buddhism of the future.

Surya Das closed the conference by inviting the entire audience to chant with him, perhaps a fitting way to bring everyone together into a practice that reflected the points he emphasized in his presentation.

In reviewing the forward-looking suggestions of Surya Das and other researchers, it is possible to isolate a number of common, internal variables in the American Buddhist movement, and there is virtually unanimous agreement among these researchers that the development of American Buddhism in the current century will depend on the unfolding of these internal variables. Broadly defined, they include the nature and definition of the sangha, democratization within the entire tradition, ethnicity, gender equality, practice orientation, social engagement, and sectarian issues as the challenges of the future. Although there seems little doubt that American Buddhism will continue to be a mostly lay-oriented movement, more and more successful monastic communities are beginning to appear on the landscape which provide various kinds of monastic living experiences for members of the American Buddhist sangha. Contextually, it is within the expanding inclusiveness of the American sangha that new and evolving experiments in self-governance are emerging which provide exciting possibilities for American Buddhists living in both urban and rural settings. Further, these attempts at a rationally conceived democratization of the sangha include thoughtful considerations of how to successfully implement gender equality, respect for the full spectrum of Buddhist practices and practitioners within both the Asian immigrant and American convert communities, and a keen awareness that social engagement is the most profound expression of Buddhism's life-affirming attitude possible. Nurtured in an environment of concern for a proper application of Buddhist ethics, implemented in a modern and global Buddhist community, and with a renewed sense of inquiry into the nature, quality, and requirements of spiritual authority, the above factors provide the American Buddhism of the next millennium with an active and positive agenda.

Nonetheless, in each of the above topics, there is a host of variables that will act and react in an interdependent fashion yielding an almost endless set of possible permutations for the future of American Buddhism. In addition to these internal variables, there are many external ones as well, relating to the changing face of American religious life. Further, there has been the development of a growing ecumenical Buddhism, and with it, a new sense of global identity. The importance of the development of an ecumenical American Buddhism cannot be stressed strongly enough, for it provides perhaps the best potential for American Buddhist unity in the current century. In other words, in looking for innovative and creative methodologies for successfully negotiating the future, American Buddhism and American Buddhists might well look beyond the North American borders and learn from the experiences of other Western Buddhists.

The importance of the American Buddhist movement can easily be seen in its rapidly growing numbers. From no more than 100,000 Buddhists in the 1960s, the tradition has grown to likely six million Buddhist in North America today. As a testament to its importance on the American religious scene, the American Academy of Religion recently authorized the creation of a new unit in its organization called the "Buddhism in the West" consultation. This will allow for yearly papers to be presented at the organization's annual meeting. Headed by an adventurous young scholar named Jeff Wilson, this unit, and the scholars who support it, will bring forth the next generation of scholarship on American Buddhism. Most likely new typologies will deconstruct or even replace the old, focusing not on the "Two Buddhisms" or "Three Lines of Transmission" outlined above, but rather on an American Buddhism of hybridity, a mixing of traditions, and an inter-religious dialogue that will move the entire tradition forward. In so doing, the coming years in the development of American Buddhism may exhibit a genuine interest in the American Buddhist ecumenicism mentioned above; one in which Buddhists from each of the "vehicles" and cultures will communicate openly and meaningfully.

Notes

1. Rick Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America*, 3rd edition, revised and updated. Boston: Shambhala, 1992, pp.70-71.
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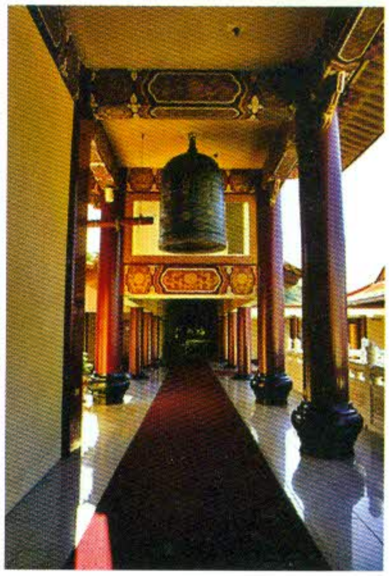


Temple Bell-Hsi Lai Tem. los Angeles

Buddha City of Irvine CA

Wat Bhuridattavanaram-USA

ESSAY 34

Buddhism in Canada

John S Harding, Victor Sōgen Hori, and Alexander Soucy

Introduction

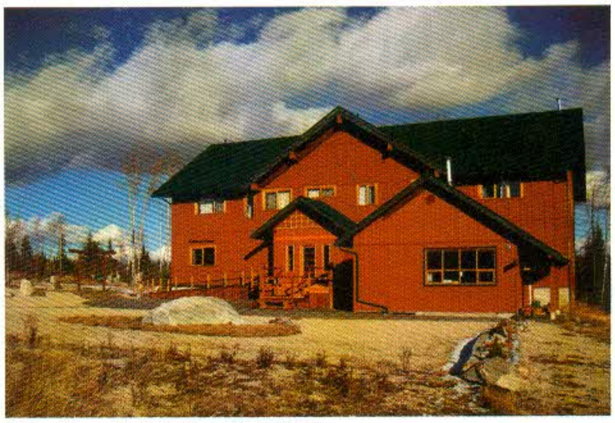
The history of Buddhism in Canada is not long, dating only to the beginning of the twentieth century, but it has increased in tempo and intensity over the last century. The nascent field of scholarship about Buddhism in Canada has also quickened its pace in the last dozen years from the publication of Janet McLellan's *Many Petals of the Lotus: Five Asian Buddhist Communities in Toronto* (1999), to Bruce Matthews' book, *Buddhism in Canada* (2006), and through to our 2010 volume, *Wild Geese: Buddhism in Canada* (2010). Together, these books mark a progression from detailed case studies in one Canadian city, to a broad province by province survey to a comprehensive study from the early history of Buddhism in Canada to the present, including diverse communities, traditions, topics, and tensions constitutive of the multicultural mosaic that has influenced the development of Buddhism in Canada and to which Buddhism makes increasingly visible contributions. These studies illustrate the increasingly intricate and diverse presence of Buddhism in Canada.

It is important to note, however, that before the 1960s, it would not have been accurate to depict Canada's religious landscape as multicultural and inhabited by diverse Buddhist traditions. The early story of Buddhism in Canada is primarily connected to Japanese and Chinese immigrants who arrived in Canada as labourers long before supportive government policies and widespread favourable interest in Buddhism among Canadians of European descent. Jōdo Shinshū (True Pure Land) Buddhism, practiced primarily by Japanese immigrants and then by their Japanese-Canadian descendents, was clearly the dominant form of Buddhism in Canada from the arrival of the first priest in 1905 and subsequent founding of the first Canadian Buddhist temple until approximately the late 1960s or 1970s. In the face of racist government policies and discrimination, Jōdo Shinshū spread across Canada from British Columbia in the west to the provinces and capitals further east. By 1929, a small town in southern Alberta had the first Buddhist church east of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. That "church" – a term that, along with "minister" and "reverend", reflected certain pressures of assimilation at that time – was followed by others in later decades, gradually moving further east: Toronto in the 1940s, Manitoba in the 1950s and Quebec in the 1960s (Harding, Hori and Soucy 2010, 3-10).

It was not until the 1960s that Buddhism in Canada developed beyond this Japanese community as a result of two factors. The first was the social revolution of the 1960s, where young Canadians, Americans and Europeans started to question the social norms of the World War Two generation. Experimentation and resistance movements were widespread, and included many young people rebelling against the religious traditions of their upbringing and looking to Asia for inspiration. While writings about Buddhism had been available decades earlier, it was during this period that Buddhism was popularized. The most attractive forms of Buddhism were those that emphasized personal enlightenment through individual endeavour, such as those stressed in the new Zen teachings and by the Tibetan teacher Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, who actively tried to tailor his image and his representation of Buddhist teachings and practices for Hippie sensibilities. The other factor in the emergence of Buddhism during the 1960s and 1970s came about because of government policy and increased population movements from countries beyond Europe. In 1967 the Canadian government revised immigration laws, which were deliberately designed to prevent the growth of the Asian population in Canada. The new policy abolished its race-based immigration laws and adopted a race-neutral points-based system for admitting immigrants that took into account levels of education, ability to speak either English or French, type of occupation, and so on. This led to an influx of immigrants from around the world, including Buddhist countries like Vietnam, China, Korea and other Southeast Asian countries. Two of the bigger groups of migrants who have come to Canada since that time have been the Chinese (including those coming from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and more recently from mainland China), and the Vietnamese, most of who arrived in the early 1980s as part of the group of refugees that were dubbed the "Boat People" by the media. These groups set up their own Buddhist temples that remained, for the most part, representative of the communities and practices of the countries and traditions from which they had originated. As such, these Buddhist communities served both a religious and a cultural function, maintaining ethnic cohesion in the face of the challenges of resettling in multicultural Canada.

Keeping this history of two different origins (one ethnic based and one comprised of converts) in mind, it is nonetheless misleading to extrapolate this distinction to hard and fast categories of Buddhists. While there are communities that maintain ethnic homogeneity, there are also many factors that blur these boundaries. One of these is the new generations being brought up in a way that makes such distinctions problematic. For example, one of the authors of this chapter was brought up in a family that was not Buddhist, but himself became ordained as a Rinzai Zen monk. There are now second generation Buddhists following the Shambhala tradition, who are ethnically European but not converts to Buddhism. There are international Buddhist organizations, like Buddha Light International and Tzu Chi, that are rooted in Chinese forms of Buddhism but which are attempting to get away from ethnic communalism and attract a broader group of members. HH the Dalai Lama is at once a leader of the Tibetan diaspora, but also the spiritual leader of many Buddhist converts of European descent.

One of the main attractions to Buddhism by Westerners has been a search for personal salvation through individual practice, which simultaneously de-emphasizes faith. This has, in turn, been taken as a hallmark of Western groups of Buddhists, who concentrate on meditation as a central practice, often placed in opposition to Asian Mahayana Buddhist practitioners, who value faith and focus on reciting sutras as a central practice[1] With the exception of the Thai forest monastery tradition, even Theravada Buddhists from Southeast Asia do not make meditation the central feature as do Western Buddhists. It has, therefore, been easy to draw distinctions between these groups. Nonetheless, drawing a hard and fast distinction between Asian and Western Buddhists can be misleading. Vipassana, which is entirely focused on meditation, is a lay organization that attracts both Asians and Westerners. The Order of Interbeing, founded by Thích Nhất Hạnh, draws both Vietnamese and Western adherents. Even Buddhist organizations that focus on devotional activities, like Soka Gakkai, have been successful in attracting Western adherents. While admittedly rarer, there are also some Buddhists of European decent who have joined communities that would be characterized as "ethnic". For example, there are a few Westerners who have been ordained as Jōdo Shinshū priests and there are a few white Canadians who attend Vietnamese Buddhists temples where English is seldom spoken, though they speak no Vietnamese. These, and other factors, serve to soften boundaries that mark differences between Buddhists of Asian and European descent.


Birken Fores Buddhis Monastery Vihara

Buddhism in Canada today is vibrant, being the fourth largest religion in the country. At around 300,000 adherents as of 2001, it has doubled from ten years before, after having tripled from 1971 to 1981 and again by 1991. Peter Beyer predicts that Canada's coming decennial census in 2011 will likely reveal that the number of Buddhists has doubled again and that Buddhism will trail only Christianity and Islam (2010, 112). The forms of Buddhism present in Canada represent all forms from Asia, and many that hybridize with Western ideas and practices. However, it would be misleading to think of these as a new form of unified "Western Buddhism", for many innovations that are prominent in Canada and the United States have their roots in Buddhist revitalization movements in Asia from the beginning of the twentieth century (Soucy 2010). Furthermore, there is a continuing interplay with Buddhism in Asian countries, and continuing transformation in Asian Buddhist countries, that defies claims that what we are seeing in the West is a new form of Buddhism naturally occurring through a process of localization.

Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism in Canada

Jōdo Shinshū is at once formative to Buddhism in Canada and an anomaly in comparison to the more recent waves of Buddhist immigrants who arrived after Canada's government revised immigration policy and adopted an official stance promoting multiculturalism. Although less than one Buddhist in twenty declared Japanese ethnic origin in Canada's 2001 census, there is no doubt that Jōdo Shinshū had been the dominant tradition for more than half of the history of Buddhism in Canada. Jōdo Shinshū continued to thrive through the 1970s; in fact, 63.8 per cent of Buddhists in Canada indicated Japanese ethnic origin in the 1971 census before falling off to 20.2

Sakya Muni Buddha

per cent in 1981, 8.2 per cent in 1991, and 4.5 per cent in 2001 (Beyer 2010). These statistics reflect the recent, rapid rise and ongoing immigration of other Buddhist groups more than they do a steep decline of Jōdo Shinshū adherents. Nonetheless, times have changed. A recent change of name at the institutional level from Buddhist Churches of Canada (BCC) to Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Temples of Canada (JSBTC) illustrates two related aspects of this transition. The new name acknowledges that the JSBTC represents Jōdo Shinshū – rather than all Buddhism – in Canada. Moreover, the name signals a shift from Buddhist "Churches" to Buddhist "Temples" of Canada. Canada's multiculturalism of recent decades has facilitated both the growing presence of many forms of Buddhism, which necessitated a name that did not inaccurately suggest leadership of all those diverse traditions, and the social acceptance of community "temples" relatively free of pressure to assimilate to the primarily Christian religious landscape of "churches".

In the story of Buddhism in Canada, only Jōdo Shinshū institutions have had a continuous presence for more than a century. As most Buddhist groups in Canada are less than fifty years old, Jōdo Shinshū provides the only multi-generational case study. Social pressures in the shifting cultural and historical contexts during this span explain the assimilation of certain terms, practices, and organizations that resemble Christianity. Jōdo Shinshū in North America originated with Japanese immigration. Institutional support followed, primarily from the Nishi Hongwanji branch headquarters in Kyoto, Japan. Immigrants came to North America in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and attained sufficient numbers in the Vancouver area for the establishment of a Jōdo Shinshū church soon after the 1905 arrival of the priest, Sasaki Senju, and his wife, Tomie. Terry Watada notes that it was only in 1909 that the British Columbia government officially recognized Jōdo Shinshū as a religion (2010, 65), and that the establishment of the religion "began not so much as an expression of religious zeal but rather out of a need on the part of Japanese immigrants to preserve Japanese culture and transmit that culture to their children and their children's children" (2010, 63). Jōdo Shinshū was the pioneer tradition for Buddhism in Canada. It spread first within British Columbia and then across the Rocky Mountains to southern Alberta.

The first temple beyond British Columbia was established in 1929 in Raymond, Alberta, which is a small town 200 km southeast of Calgary. In the wake of World War Two, this rural location became even more important to Jōdo Shinshū, making it the *de facto* centre of Buddhism in Canada in the middle of the twentieth century. The forced relocation of Japanese immigrants and Japanese-Canadian residents to internment camps or to arduous work on sugar beet farms from the beginning of 1942 underscores the perseverance shown by this early community in the face of systematic discrimination, for which Prime Minister Brian Mulroney apologized in 1988: "Mr. Speaker, I know I speak for members of all sides of the House in offering to Japanese Canadians the formal and sincere apology of this Parliament for those past injustices against them, their families, and their heritage, and our solemn commitment to Canadians of every origin that they will never again be countenanced or repeated."

The Raymond Buddhist Church, which had formerly been a school and Mormon meeting house, had already served for more than a dozen years as the hub of the area's Japanese-Canadian community by the time the Japanese population of southern Alberta experienced a five-fold increase in the spring of 1942 (Harding 2010). In the immediate aftermath of the war, the Raymond Buddhist Church became the unlikely centre of Buddhism in Canada. That is, it served as headquarters for the Buddhist Foundation of Canada (BFC), the support centre for fundraising and ministerial recruitment, and the repository for important items that had been in Buddhist churches in British Columbia – including Steveston's statue, Royston's altar, and even funerary urns of members' ashes.

The vitality of this Buddhist hub includes enduring influences ranging from cultural forms, such as judo, to shaping Buddhism in North America in terms of scholarship and ministerial service. For example, the influential first three ministers for the Raymond Buddhist Church – Shinjo Nagatomi, Yutetsu Kawamura, and Shinjo Ikuta – all had sons who made major contributions in one or both of these areas. Masatoshi Nagatomi "became one of the best-known scholars of Buddhist studies during his almost half-century affiliation with Harvard," Leslie Kawamura became a minister and a "renowned Buddhologist specializing in Indian Yogācāra Buddhism" who established the Numata Chair in Buddhist Studies at the University of Calgary, and Susumu Kyojo Ikuta became a minister and "the first Canadian-raised *sōchō* (Bishop) of the Buddhist Churches of Canada" – in fact, his son, Grant Ikuta, continues the Jōdo Shinshū ministerial tradition (Harding 2010, 143-144).

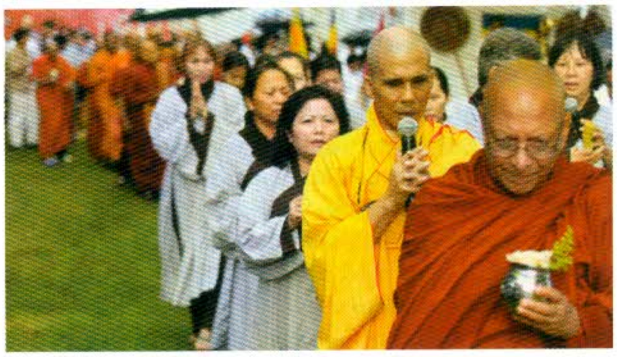
Canada's discriminatory policies, which swelled the numbers of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists in southern Alberta, also led to the deportation of most ministers, an acceleration of the already formidable forces of assimilation, and an unintended eastward spread of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism to multiple churches in southern Alberta and then on to Toronto, Manitoba, and Montreal (Ichikawa 1994). The tradition also became re-established in British Columbia once it finally became legal to move back to the province. The decades following the war included periods of growth and thriving communities with vibrant programs for members of all ages. The inter-generational dynamics led to adjustments including a gradual shift in language from the exclusive use of Japanese to a mix of Japanese and English to a predominance of English for Dharma talks and activities in the temple. The need of ministers to provide services in both languages mirrored the related demand for increasingly divergent expectations among earlier and later generations.

Greater social integration included increased intermarriage, and research by Mullins on the life-cycle and organizational dilemmas of "ethnic churches" asserts that the Japanese-Canadian community has an unusually high rate of marriage outside the group and that such marriages have tended more to a decrease than increase of adherents to Buddhism (Mullins 1987 & 1988). Moreover, professional diversification within the Japanese-Canadian community compounded the demographic shift of young people moving away from rural areas to larger cities. Some of the rural temples that had grown in the middle of the twentieth century began to diminish in later decades. Aging congregations lost Dharma Schools and other youth programs. In time, the small-town Buddhist centres of southern Alberta became peripheral and were sold, including even the Raymond Buddhist Church in 2006. The congregations then amalgamated to a new, larger Buddhist Temple of Southern Alberta (BTSA) in Lethbridge. Gauging the success of this development is of great interest and immediate relevance to other Jōdo Shinshū communities in North America that are losing members.

Although Jōdo Shinshū remains an important force in North American Buddhism, it does not enjoy the ongoing flow of immigrants to bolster and renew its membership that characterizes the growth of Chinese Buddhism in Canada. The lack of immigration from Japan, in addition to its unique history, longevity, and adaptations, further differentiates Jōdo Shinshū from Buddhist traditions brought to Canada by more recent immigrant communities. This tradition also stands apart from forms of Buddhism that have been more popular among Buddhist converts and sympathizers during the Zen boom or current vogue of Tibetan Buddhism in the West.

In response to concerns about its future vitality in North America, Jōdo Shinshū adherents have discussed what, if any, adaptations might improve retention of younger generations and attract new members. Some have considered introducing more meditation into Jōdo Shinshū practice, or special introductory sessions, with the idea of engaging the interest of perspective converts. These characteristics of modern rather than traditional Buddhism are also contemplated for retaining third or fourth generation descendants who may be encountering Buddhism through university classes or popular culture

International Buddhist Tem. near Richmond BC Canada



Monks Nuns walk in a procession-Mississauga -Ontario more than from the temple or a traditional upbringing. This internal discussion highlights a key characteristic of Jōdo Shinshū as Buddhism for the family rather than a facility for acquiring individual techniques. Whether this is a strength or weakness cuts to the heart of the concern within Jōdo Shinshū in North America, of how best to survive, and preferably, grow and thrive. Some suggest greater assimilation and accommodation to what people may seek from Buddhism, even if that is quite different from the norms of that tradition (Payne 2005). Alternately, others favour catering to more traditional expectations and hoping, perhaps, that as Buddhism in the West matures, there will be a growing demand for just such a Buddhism for the family epitomized by Jōdo Shinshū (Grumbach 2005).

Chinese Buddhism in Canada

When the Chinese arrived in Canada in the latter half of the nineteenth century, they set up local joss temples and simple neighbourhood shrines to folk gods. As Table 1 shows, at the first postwar Census survey in 1951 the Chinese numbered only 32,528 individuals, not quite twice their number fifty years before in 1901. This low figure was the result of federal immigration policies deliberately designed to prevent the growth of the Chinese population in Canada. But in 1967, Canada abolished its race-based immigration laws, and with this revision, Chinese immigration accelerated dramatically. In each of the decades 1961 to 1971, 1971 to 1981 and 1981 to 1991, the Chinese immigrant population more than doubled, and in the decades after 1991 all signs indicate that the total number of immigrants continues to vigorously grow. Beginning in the 1970s, the Chinese began to build the red and gold Buddhist temples which now dot the Canadian urban landscape. The construction of these Chinese Buddhist temples should be seen in two contexts: the encounter of traditional Asian Buddhism with modernity and the close connection of local Buddhism with developments in global Buddhism.

Year	**Chinese in Canada**
1901	17,312
1911	27,831
1921	39,587
1931	46,519
1941	34,627
1951	32,528
1961	58,197
1971	124,600
1981	285,800
1991	633,933
1996	921,585
2001	1,029,395
Li 2000, 105	

Locally-Based Buddhism: The Case of Cham Shan

The first Chinese Buddhist temple in Canada was founded when Mrs Yingjin Yutang of Toronto met the Chinese Buddhist monks Master Sing Hung (性空法師, 1924-), Master Shing Cheung (誠祥法師, 1920-2006) and Master Lok To (樂渡法師, 1923-) in 1967 at the World Exposition in Montreal. As the Chinese immigrant population in the Toronto area had grown to the point where it felt the need for a proper Buddhist temple, she asked the three monks to come to Toronto, offering to provide their daily expenses. They accepted her offer, and in 1973 founded the Cham Shan Buddhist temple in Richmond Hill, just north of Toronto. Since its founding, Cham Shan has grown very quickly. It has constructed several large worship halls, an imposing main gate, a memorial shrine, and also purchased the adjacent properties so that today it now measures approximately five acres. Along with this physical expansion, the temple developed a full spectrum of activities for its more than 3,000 lay devotees, including seminars, sutra reading groups, a quarterly magazine, meditation retreats, repentance services, animal release ceremonies, marriages and funerals, Buddhist palliative care, sales of Dharma artefacts and souvenirs, donation of vegetarian meals, outreach programmes, and more. Cham Shan also operates a seminary for the training of ordained sangha, and at any given time has a dozen or more monks and nuns in residence. In addition, it has created a network of temples and other Buddhist facilities spread across Toronto and southern Ontario. These include the Cham Shan Library, the Cham Shan Buddhist Learning Centre and the Hong Fa Temple, all within the city of Toronto, and several branch temples in towns and communities outside Toronto. A particularly striking construction is the imposing Sarira Stupa in Niagara Falls, which rises seven storeys and houses 10,000 small images of the Buddha; it has quickly become one of the "must see" sites for tourists who visit Niagara Falls.[2] Most recently, Cham Shan has undertaken a major project: the construction of temples on four widely separated pieces of property in the province of Ontario to represent the sacred "four mountains" of China: Mt Putou, Mt Emei, Mt Wutai and Mt Jiuhua. The very scale of this mega-project symbolizes the confidence with which the Chinese Buddhist community practices its Buddhism in its newly adopted country.

Cham Shan is a stand-alone temple. Although its monks and lay members may have personal ties to temples and monks in East Asia, the temple itself is not a branch of any temple in China, Taiwan or Hong Kong. The leadership at Cham Shan, drawn from its own monks and lay supporters, makes its own decisions. The temple has been able to sustain strong growth by itself because of the great size of the Chinese immigrant population in Toronto and surrounding communities. This is in contrast to the Montreal Chinese Buddhist Society, which is similarly founded by laypeople wanting a temple for the local Chinese immigrant community.[3] The Montreal Chinese immigrant community was never large enough to attract a full-time resident monk, and as an independent temple, the Chinese Buddhist Society too has never had any other resources besides the local community to draw on. Now twenty years after first being organized, the Montreal Chinese Buddhist Society faces a shrinking membership and the possibility that it may soon have to close its doors for good.

What kind of Buddhism does Cham Shan practice? Visitors to Cham Shan temple see the red paper lanterns and the coiling gold dragons; they smell the burning incense offered by the lay supporters; they note the many devotees on their knees before the altars. Since the temple looks like a temple in China, a Western visitor to Cham Shan may imagine the temple has imported the primitive folk Buddhism practiced in the rice fields of Asia. But such an assumption would be quite mistaken. The Buddhism practiced at Cham Shan is a product of an ongoing modernization process that started when traditional Chinese society collapsed under the impact of modern Western culture at the end of the nineteenth century. Chinese Buddhism at the time was in a state of degeneration. Monks and nuns had no education and were functionally illiterate. Their only activity was to perform memorial and death rituals. Government authorities, blaming religion for the backwardness of the Chinese people, advocated expulsion of Buddhist monks and the conversion of temple buildings into schools. Traditionalists like Yinguang (印光 1861-1940) urged a return to Buddhist roots and the cultivation of Pure Land piety (Jones 1999, 115-119). In the prewar period, reformist monks like Taixu (太虛,1890-1947) called for education for monks and nuns, elimination of the superstitious elements which had infiltrated into Buddhist ritual and social engagement rather than social withdrawal (Pittman 2001).

Cham Shan's three founding monks, Master Sing Hung, Master Shing Cheung and Master Lok To, grew up in China in this atmosphere of Buddhist reform and were particularly influenced by the monk Tanxu (倓虛, 1875-1963). Tanxu reconstructed temples, supported many efforts to publish Buddhist texts, advocated the idea that Buddhism could provide a moral foundation for China in the new international world (Carter 2011, 83).As civil war engulfed China, Tanxu himself fled to Hong Kong and did not see his dreams of a modern Buddhism realized. But his students – both lay and ordained – kept his vision of a modernised Buddhism alive. The three founding monks named their temple Cham Shan after the famous monastery in Hong Kong where Tanxu had been abbot (Carter 2011, 7). At Cham Shan in Canada, they teach Buddhism as religion rather than superstition, as a moral foundation for living in the modern world, as at home in the international world. The three founding monks retired in 2003. The new abbot, Master Dayi, was born in China but he has a bachelor's degree in psychology and Asian studies as well as a Masters Degree in Asian history from the City University of New York. He is a modern monk teaching a modern Buddhism. Tanxu would surely have approved.

Global Buddhisms: Fo Guang Shan and Tzu Chi

Another Chinese Buddhist reformer, Taixu, referred to the new Buddhism he was trying to create as "Buddhism for Human Life" (人生佛教, *rensheng fojiao*), emphasizing that Buddhism was not about ghosts and spirits or about memorial and death rituals. He also used the term "Humanistic Buddhism" (人間佛教, *renjian fojiao*), stressing that Buddhism was about "this world" where humans actually resided, not some ideal "other world". Today the term "Humanistic Buddhism" labels a broad movement in modern Chinese Buddhism, based in Taiwan but anchoring networks which encompass the globe. Leading the Humanistic Buddhism movement are organizations such as Buddha Light Mountain (佛光山, Fo Guang Shan), the Buddhist Compassion and Relief Tzu Chi Foundation (慈濟基金會), and Dharma Drum

Monthly memorial service. Manitoba Bud. Temple

Mountain (法鼓山, Fagu Shan). Buddha Light Mountain, otherwise known as the International Buddhist Progress Society (IBPS), has five temples in Taiwan, six in other countries of Asia including Japan, five in Europe, three in the Pacific including a major temple in Australia, one in South Africa and twelve temples in the USA and Canada. Fo Guang Shan temples are massive structures built in the Chinese red and gold palace style. Fo Guang Shan also operates the University of the West in Los Angeles, an accredited Buddhist university offering both undergraduate and graduate programmes in Buddhism.

Humanistic Buddhism, as taught by Master Hsing Yun, the founder of Fo Guang Shan, stresses the compatibility of Buddhism with modern education and it operates its own schools and universities. In addition to Buddhist ritual, it also offers its lay and ordained followers meditation and other practice techniques. It teaches people how to live in modern society where people are juggling career, family, urban life, raising children, and so on. It is steadfastly optimistic, countering the criticism that the Buddhist teaching of suffering is dark and pessimistic Significantly, it also provides them with a Buddhist outlet for their desire to do something for society. Its television station, media publications, international outreach programs clearly show that Fo Guang Shan is quite at home with modern technology and modern advertising. On the international front, it actively promotes world peace, human rights, and humanistic values.

In Canada, there are IBPS temples in Vancouver, Mississauga, Ottawa and Montreal. In Ottawa and Montreal, IBPS renovated previously existing buildings, but the temples in Vancouver and Mississauga were designed as Buddhist temples and are especially imposing. The Canadian branch temples are well aware of their connection to the headquarters Fo Guang Shan temple in Kaohsiung, Taiwan and of their place in the worldwide network of IBPS temples. The head of each Fo Guang Shan temple is a monk or nun (usually a nun) who is appointed by the headquarters temple. The head nun's term is usually three years, although there are exceptional cases where she may stay longer. When Master Hsing Yun tours the Canadian and US IBPS temples, giving public lectures to packed audiences, all temples join forces to provide him and his entourage an appropriate welcome.

Sister Nimmala-Tisarana Buddhist Monastry

Much of the reform characteristics mentioned above can also be said for the Buddhist Relief and Compassion Tzu Chi Foundation based in Taiwan. Under the leadership of its founder, the charismatic Buddhist nun Cheng Yen, Tzu Chi has developed a worldwide network of branches in more than thirty countries. In Canada, Tzu Chi branches can be found in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. Rather than teaching Dharma, it focuses on providing relief to people in need. It has been called "a Buddhist Red Cross". In Taiwan, Tzu Chi runs several state-of-the-art hospitals and medical clinics providing medical aid to anyone, regardless of income. It has a comprehensive school system providing education from primary school through university. Around the world, its branches are organized not only to provide ongoing relief to people in need but also to respond immediately with medical aid, water, food and relief supplies in times of global emergencies, as they did with the tsunami in Indonesia and with Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. Again, like Fo Guang Shan, Tzu Chi is quite at home in modern society and with modern technology, having, for example, its own television station, publishing house, hospitals and schools.

Tzu Chi branches in Canada are not stand alone independent organizations. The leaders of the local Canadian branches are chosen in conjunction with Tzu Chi headquarters in Hualien, Taiwan. The senior leadership in each Tzu Chi branch, called "commissioners", get their final training in Taiwan and receive their certification there. The typical Tzu Chi member around the world wears a uniform of blue shirt with white pants and learns Tzu Chi etiquette (bowing, being seated in a chair, eating, etc.) from videos sent from Taiwan. A constant stream of online news is sent from Taiwan headquarters and

Canada headquarters in Vancouver. Tzu Chi members in Canada entertain the elderly at the local Chinese hospital, clean the surrounding streets of refuse and garbage and distribute food to the poor through food banks, quite conscious of the fact that Tzu Chi members around the world – in East Asia, in South America, in the Middle East – are doing likewise.

Zen Buddhism in Canada

The "Zen boom" that hit North America in the 1960s was preceded by a period of more than fifty years of preparation. The first Zen monk to come to North America was the Japanese Rinzai monk Shaku Sōen who attended the World Parliament of Religions at the Chicago World Fair in 1893. His disciples carried on the task of transmitting Zen to the West. First, his lay disciple, DT Suzuki, a scholar prolific in both English and Japanese, produced a long series of books through which he became the unofficial voice of Zen in the West during the first half of the twentieth century. Then, Senzaki Nyogen, another lay disciple, started teaching in his "floating zendo" on the west coast during the 1920s, while the monk Sasaki Sōkei-an, a grand-disciple of Shaku Sōen, opened the First Zen Institute of America in 1930 in New York City. Before and after the war, writers like Alan Watts and Jack Kerouac wrote books popularizing Asian religions. From 1952 to 1957, DT Suzuki gave a series of lectures at Columbia University which influenced scholars of religion, psychologists, artists and a few practitioners. Then the Zen boom hit. In the 1960s and '70s, one Zen master after another established monasteries, suddenly making meditation practice available to all. But the scandals of the 1980s broke the back of the Zen boom and in subsequent years, although the Zen movement has continued, it has fragmented to the point where it is no longer a single cohesive movement.

Zen Boom[4]

In a quite short space of time, a series of distinguished Japanese and Western Zen teachers, one after another, came from Japan to start training centres – monasteries – in North America, including the San Francisco Zen Centre in 1962, the Rochester Zen Centre in 1966, the Zen Centre of Los Angeles in 1967, Shasta Abbey in California in 1970, the Mt Baldy Zen Centre in 1971 and the Daibosatsu Zendo in upstate New York in 1976. In the brief span of fifteen years, six Zen monasteries had opened under the guidance of accredited Zen masters (although there was some question of Philip Kapleau's status). Together they created a momentum in which the spread of Zen encouraged the further spread of Zen. For a while in the 1960s and '70s, Zen was the most visible form of Buddhism in North America, eclipsing other lines of Buddhism.

Branches of this Zen boom reached into Canada. The Mt Baldy Zen Centre established a branch, the Vancouver Zen Centre in 1970, and another branch in Montreal, the Centre Zen de la Main, in 1995. In 1972, Philip Kapleau started the Toronto Buddhist Centre, eventually incorporated as the Toronto Zen Centre in 1986. The Edmonton Buddhist Meditation Group, a branch of Jiyu Kennett's Order of Buddhist Contemplatives, was established in 1979. The French-speaking province of Quebec attracted a branch of the Association Zen Internationale, a lineage that exists nowhere else in North America. AZI was founded by the Sōtō Zen Master Taisen Deshimaru in France with branches throughout Europe.

Canada has also produced its own Zen master. Albert Low originally trained with Philip Kapleau at the Rochester Zen Centre during the 1970-80s. In 1979, he took over leadership of the Montreal branch of the Rochester Zen Centre and received Dharma transmission in 1986. However, in subsequent years, Low broke off his relations with Philip Kapleau and established himself as an independent teacher. To make Zen understandable in the West, he has developed a teaching style that omits those elements of Japanese culture not directly relevant to Zen practice. A Catholic reader with a wide variety of interests, Low is as apt to quote from TS Eliot as from a Chinese Chan text. He has written more than a dozen books on topics ranging from commentaries on sutras to the application of Zen to business management.[5]

The above account gives the impression that Zen is a unitary tradition flowing out of Japan, but in fact also includes Chinese Chan and Korean Son, which are also represented in Canada. The Chinese Chan master Sheng Yen started coming to the United States in 1976. He established the Chan Meditation Centre in Queens, New York and his students created local Chan centres across the continent. His umbrella organization, the Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association, had thirty-one branches when he died in 2009. Unlike the Japanese-derived Zen centres, which appealed primarily to white people, Master Sheng Yen's Chan appealed to both Chinese people and white Americans. Dharma Drum Mountain has two branches in Canada, one in Vancouver and one in Toronto.[6]

The Korean Son monk, Samu Sunim, arrived in New York in 1968, spent three years in retreat in Montreal and then started teaching Korean style Zen. He called his organization the Zen Lotus Society but later changed to the Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom. He has built Zen Buddhist Temples in Toronto, Ann Arbor, Chicago, Mexico City and New York. In 1986, he organized the first North American Zen Teachers Conference in Ann Arbor, which has since met annually ever since. In 1987 in Ann Arbor, Sunim organized the Conference on World Buddhism in North America, and in 1990 in Toronto he hosted the weeklong Conference on Buddhism in Canada. Samu Sunim's organization ministers equally to the Korean immigrant community and the white Canadian community.[7]

In the 1980s, the entire Zen movement in North America was shocked by a series of sex scandals which involved some of its most respected teachers. In 1984, the San Francisco Zen Centre, the pre-eminent Zen centre at the time, learned that its *roshi* (Zen master), Richard Baker, was having sexual relations with one of his students. The ensuing controversy revealed that Baker had had several other prior sexual liaisons. The board of the San Francisco Zen Center forced him to resign (Downing 2001). About the same time, Maezumi Taizan, the *roshi* of the Zen Center of Los Angeles, was similarly accused of improper sexual relations with his female students. In addition, his students forced him to enter a detox centre to treat his alcohol addiction. Teachers at other Zen centres and at Buddhist centres outside of Zen were suddenly being accused of sexual impropriety. Until the sex scandals, students in Zen had idolized the Zen master. To them, the Zen master was a superhuman being whose every word and action expressed the enlightenment of the Buddha. The sex scandals destroyed that image completely. Zen practice lost its magic and the Zen tradition in North America lost its position of pre-eminence as the form of Buddhism most favoured by Westerners.

Many Kinds of Zen

The Zen tradition has continued on with a chastened attitude, but today there are so many different traditions and lineages claiming to be Zen that it cannot be considered a unitary tradition. First of all, as mentioned above, Zen was never a strictly Japanese tradition, although. Chinese and Korean Zen lineages did not receive as much attention. Today the situation has become even more complex. The Vietnamese monk Thích Nhất Hạnh, who claims to be a Zen master in the Trúc Lâm lineage, has emerged as a major figure. Groups like the Société Bouddhique les Érables in Montreal teach Zen in the style of Thích Nhất Hạnh. Second, the example of Thích Nhất Hạnh's style reveals a second difference with the Zen of the 1970s. Although the first generation teachers of Japanese-derived Zen were Japanese, in the 1970s and '80s, all Japanese-derived Zen centres, without exception, had memberships that were almost entirely white. Today, non-white immigrant Buddhist groups teach Zen. A Chinese temple like Cham Shan in Toronto holds Chan meditation retreats assuming that all the people who will attend are Chinese. The Chinese temples of Fo Guang Shan are similar. Third, temples and teachers are emerging who combine Zen with other forms of Buddhism. Cham Shan teaches both Chan and Pure Land. The Vietnamese Buddhist nun Thich nu Tinh Quang in Hamilton, Ontario teaches Zen and Theravāda.[8] Fourth, gender orientation has become a factor. Whereas in the past Zen centres usually identified themselves as Sōtō or Rinzai, today for some groups gender orientation defines the style of Zen practice. Dharma Friends in Toronto is a Gay and Lesbian group open for Zen practice. Amazenji in British Columbia is a Zen centre led by a woman teacher for women students.

Theravada Buddhism in Canada

In geographical terms, Theravada Buddhism today refers to the Buddhism of South and Southeast Asia, including Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Burma (Myanmar) Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. As immigrants and refugees from each of these countries have settled in Canada, they have also established temples to practice their country's style of Theravada Buddhism. However there are also forms of Theravada Buddhism that have been adopted by white people. These include the Insight Meditation movements and the monasteries of the Thai Forest tradition.

Immigrants and Refugees

Probably the first Theravada temple built in Canada was the Toronto Maha Vihara, built by the Sri Lankan community in Scarborough, Ontario. They first incorporated as the Canadian Buddhist Vihara Society in 1973 and purchased a small property (a former fast food outlet) which they renovated and opened as a temple, the Toronto Maha Vihara, in 1978. The immigrant population in east end Toronto, however, continued to increase quickly and soon the temple could no longer accommodate the overflow crowds. A much larger property was purchased in 1995 and, after extensive renovation, the new temple was opened with an imposing ceremony in 2000. The temple is active in both the Sri Lankan community and the wider Toronto community. When the tsunami struck Southeast Asia in 2004, the temple became a main channel through which relief funds were sent to Sri Lanka. It afterward created an NGO, the Toronto Mahavihara Scholarship Foundation, to help needy children in Sri Lanka in the tsunami-affected areas.[9] Today the Toronto Maha Vihara is a well-established and respected senior member of the Toronto Buddhist community with two, three or more monks always in residence.[10] As most of the Sri Lankans have been selected for immigration partly for their ability to speak English, members have comparatively less difficulty moving between Sri Lankan culture and mainstream Canadian culture.

The Pagode Khmer, serving the Cambodian community in Montreal, is also an early Theravada temple, but the differences with the Sri Lankan case are instructive. The Pagoda Khmer was founded in 1982 as the first of five Cambodian Buddhist temples in Canada. Cambodia had suffered much collateral bombing during the war in Vietnam through the 1960s and 70s. Then, after the fall of Saigon, the Khmer Rouge Communists in Cambodia, under the leadership of Pol Pot, unleashed a terror campaign against its own people. It initiated a vast social engineering project to create a new agrarian Communist society, killing off "class enemies". Anyone with education, Western learning, or business connection was executed (Mclellan 1999, 135-8). There are estimates that one fifth of the population died in the "killing fields". Most of the Cambodians who came to Canada thereafter came not as voluntary immigrants but as refugees, involuntarily forced out of their homeland. Further, unlike immigrants who had been selected for their language ability, education and job skills, the refugees spoke no Canadian language, had little education and few job skills. The Khmer Rouge had killed off precisely those persons who would provide leadership in a new refugee community in Canada (McLellan 1999, 141). Not surprisingly, the first generation of Cambodian-Canadians at the Pagoda Khmer have had great difficulty conversing with the surrounding Montreal population. Their Buddhist practice serves primarily to help rebuild their ethnic culture against the trauma they have suffered.

Much the same story can be told of the Laotian temples in Canada. Laos, too, suffered massive collateral bombing during the Vietnam War came to Canada as refugees rather than immigrants. Many were "Boat People". Laotians also had neither English nor French language, little education and few job skills. Yet the Laotians have built temples in British Columbia, all the prairie provinces in central Canada and in Ontario and Quebec. Probably the largest temple is the Wat Lao Veluwanaram in north of Toronto, Ontario, built on seventy acres of land in 2006 over the active resistance of local area residents (White 2006). Since Buddhism is such an important part of Laotian culture, the Buddhist Wat plays an essential role in the creation of a new Laotian cultural identity in Canada.

The Vipassana Meditation Movement

There are two branches of the vipassana meditation movement. One branch is associated with S. N. Goenka (1924-), an Indian who grew up in Burma, where he learned the *vipassana* meditation of Sayagyi U Ba Khin. Goenka is a lay teacher. Further, even though he says the style of meditation he teaches is derived from the Buddha's meditation, he teaches meditation stripped of its Buddhist religious context. "The Buddha never taught a sectarian religion; he taught Dhamma – the way to liberation – which is universal," he says.[11] Nevertheless the content of what he teaches – mindfulness breathing (*ānāpānasati*), momentary concentration, "noting" and "labeling," seeing with equanimity, "bare awareness," loving kindness (*metta*) meditation – is clearly Buddhist meditation. Over several decades of teaching, he has built a worldwide network of centres and created a system for training assistant teachers. In Canada, there are Goenka centres in Ottawa and Egbert, Ontario, in Merritt and on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, in Bowden,Alberta, and in Sutton, Quebec.

The other branch of the vipassana meditation is the Insight Meditation movement founded by Joseph Goldstein (1940-), Jack Kornfield (1945-) and Sharon Salzberg (1952-). Goldstein and Kornfield joined the Peace Corps in their youth and went to Thailand, where they came into contact with teachers of the Burmese meditation method. Salzberg spent several years in India learning meditation. On their return to the United States, they created a new form of meditation practice which on one hand, removed much of the ritual and tradition which accompanied Theravāda Buddhist meditation, and on the other hand used western style psychotherapy to teach vipassana meditation. The secular approach allows both Goenka meditation and Insight Meditation to be used in hospitals and prisons. In 1976 Goldstein, Kornfield and Salzberg started the Insight Meditation Society (IMS) in Barre, Massachusetts, and established a West Coast branch in 1987 at Spirit Rock Meditation Center north of San Francisco in California. There are now hundreds of teachers of insight meditation at centres around the world. Centres in Canada include the True North Insight Meditation Centre based in eastern Ontario, the Ottawa Mindfulness Clinic, the Northwoods Mindfulness Community, the Westcoast Dharma Society, the Salt Spring Vipassana Community, the British Columbia Insight Meditation Society and more.

Thai Forest Tradition

At the opposite end of the Theravada spectrum is the Thai Forest Tradition. The Thai Forest Tradition started in the early 1900s when some Thai monks reacted against the style of practice then common. At that time, Thai monasteries were located in urban areas and monastic training consisted mainly in study of the Pali Canon, with little emphasis on meditation and no clear disengagement from social life and its values. In reaction, monks like Ajahn Chah withdrew into the forest to revive the practice of the original Buddha. Today, the Thai Forest Tradition is known for its asceticism, close adherence to the *vinaya* regulations, which govern monastic life, and an emphasis on meditation and discipline.

Four monasteries of the Thai Forest Tradition have opened in Canada: Sītavana Birken Forest Monastery in British Columbia; Tisarana Buddhist Monastery in Perth, Ontario; the Arrow River Forest Hermitage in Thunder Bay, Ontario; and the Sati Saraniya Hermitage also in Perth Ontario. In every case, the monastery is led by a long time western-born monastic who received ordination only after many years of monastic training, usually under a Thai master. Ordained monastics are expected to live their lives according to the Buddhist precepts. Not only are they expected to be celibate, but monks cannot be alone in an enclosed room (or car) with a person of the opposite sex. Ordained monks cannot handle money, cannot cultivate crops, work the land or store food. In Theravada countries, monks daily go out on alms-begging rounds and receive their food for the day. At the Canadian forest monasteries, the monks similarly receive their food and do not cook for themselves. Because the activity of monastics is so restricted, each monastery needs a steward, a lay person, who is willing to live with the monks and also perform the tasks which monks cannot perform.

The Sati Saraniya is unusual in that it is a hermitage for women. Ordination for women has a continuous history in East Asia – today Korean Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism in Taiwan have vigorous Buddhist nun sanghas – but elsewhere in the Buddhist world – Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka, Tibet – the women's lineage has died out. In the last few decades, Buddhist women (and others) have pressed for the revival of ordination for women, and there have been attempts, though they are not yet fully accepted by establishment. The abbess of the Sati Saraniya Hermitage is Ayya Medhanandi (*née* Mary Fiksel, 1949), a native of Montreal. After many years of Buddhist training with Theravāda masters, she finally received bhikkhuni ordination in 2007. However, unable to receive ordination in her own tradition, she had to go to Taiwan and received ordination under Mahayana nuns. On her return to Canada, she has opened a Theravada Buddhist monastery for women, an institution which does not exist in any Theravada country.[12]

Vietnamese Buddhism in Canada

Vietnamese Buddhism has had a relatively short history in Canada, but has nonetheless been successful in establishing itself and spreading throughout Canada. This has led some, like McLellan, to observe that "Vietnamese Buddhist temples are among the most viable and well-structured institutions to serve the Vietnamese community" (1999, 107). There are today more than fifty-five Vietnamese Buddhist temples across Canada, with the highest concentrations in and around the major cities of Montreal and Toronto, and others spread out in other urban areas across Canada. According to the 2003 census, 33.5% of all Buddhists are from Southeast Asia, and the majority of these are Vietnamese. Only Chinese Buddhists represent a larger number (54.5%) and the third largest (Western European) is significantly smaller, at 7.4% (Beyer 2010, 115).[13] Furthermore, there are Vietnamese Buddhist institutions in all provinces from Quebec to the Pacific Ocean.[14]

All of these factors show a picture of a vibrant Vietnamese Buddhist community that is thriving and expanding. Tam Bảo Temple in Montreal, for example, has raised money to purchase land in the mountains north of Montreal and has built a substantial monastery complex with a library, residence, a guest house and temple called the Great Pine Forest Monastery (*Đại Tòng Lâm*). In the forests and hills surrounding the complex, it has erected a number of large-scale statues representing the life of the Buddha, the Arhats, and important figures of the Mahayana pantheon.

The vigour of the Vietnamese Buddhist community that this picture portrays, however, is somewhat deceptive. Many of the expansionist moves have been the result of communities fracturing due to disagreements. The causes for these fractures are varied, but include monastics desiring autonomy, disagreements regarding the appropriate distribution of power between monastics and lay Buddhists in the control of temples, as well as ongoing political and regional difference that are rooted in the struggles in South Vietnam during the war (Dorais, 2006; McLellan 1999).

Additionally, there are a number of organizations that are intended to provide unity, but which, in fact, compete with each other to some extent. These organizations are the Unified Buddhist Church (also called the Order of Interbeing or Tiếp Hiện) founded by Thích Nhất Hạnh and headquartered in France; the World Vietnamese Buddhist Order – Ordre Bouddhique Vietnamien Mondial

(Giáo Hội Phật Giáo Việt Nam Trên Thế Giới) founded by Thích Tâm Châu and headquartered in Montreal; The World Linh Son Buddhist Congregation: Giáo Hội Phật Giáo Linh Sơn; the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam in Canada (Giáo Hội Phật Giáo Việt Nam Thống Nhất Tại Canada) founded by Thích Thiện Nghị and headquartered in Tam Bảo Sơn Monastery north of Montreal, affiliated with the international Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) (Giáo Hội Phật Giáo Việt Nam Thống Nhất) which is the main Buddhist organization that resists the Vietnamese Communist government. The leaders of this organization still live in Vietnam, though mostly in prison or house arrest, and the organization, therefore, exists more vibrantly overseas. Another Canadian affiliate of this organization is the Overseas Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam in Canada (Giáo Hội Phật Giáo Việt Nam Thống Nhất Hải Ngoại Tại Canada). The leaders of these various organizations meet annually and there is recognition of Thích Tâm Châu as the most senior monk in Canada, but he holds no real decision making power over the other groups.

Vietnamese Buddhist institutions consistently use Vietnamese language in their services and in their communal functions. They are oriented specifically towards serving the Vietnamese ethnic community. Furthermore, many of the monastics are fairly insulated and lack the linguistic or cultural capacity to reach beyond the immediate Vietnamese community. Therefore, it is fairly unusual to see non-Vietnamese at these temples, with the exception of spouses who come for important events like Lunar New Year (Tết Nguyên Đán) or for the memorial services of family members. There are some exceptions, however. On occasion, one encounters Caucasians who were brought to the temple by a Vietnamese friend and who have continued to attend services regularly. Language is not a problem; during the service they simply meditate. There are also some temples that make provisions for non-Vietnamese in one way or another. Several, such as Từ Ân Temple in Ottawa and Bồ ĐềTemple in Quebec City, share space with other non-Vietnamese Buddhist groups. Other temples offer meditation classes in French or English, such as Vulture Peak Buddhist Meditation Centre (Thiền Viện Linh Sơn) in Montreal.

Meditation is increasingly important, and plays a significant role in the Tiếp Hiện (Order of Interbeing) tradition of Thích Nhất Hạnh. The extent to which this tradition can be described as Vietnamese is questionable, as it focuses on mindfulness meditation and engaged Buddhism, rather than the traditionally prominent (and still dominant) Vietnamese practice of chanting sutras. Perhaps because of Thích Nhất Hạnh's innovations, which have taken his teachings away from traditional Vietnamese Buddhist practices, his organization has been successful in creating a community that transcends the ethnic barrier. Nonetheless, he continues to attract a large Vietnamese following, resulting in a community that perhaps could be described as uniquely including ethnic Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese, though interaction between parallel Vietnamese and Western groups is typically limited. There are currently twenty-two active groups across Canada associated with Thích Nhất Hạnh.

Vietnamese Buddhism is active in Canada, with growth spurred by a large number of ethnic Vietnamese settling in Canada following the end of the Vietnam War. Most of these Buddhist groups remain ethnically homogenous. The reasons for this are the community orientation of most of the temples, and the fact that the language spoken at most temples is Vietnamese. However, another important reason is that the form of Buddhism that is practiced at these temples is typically devotional, Pure Land Buddhism. Most Westerners have not been especially attracted to this form of Buddhism, preferring instead to focus on meditation practices. Therefore, of all the Vietnamese teachers to which non-Vietnamese in Canada have access, it is only Thích Nhất Hạnh who has been able to attract a significant number of non-Vietnamese followers.

Tibetan Buddhism in Canada

Tibetan forms of Buddhism are perhaps the most vigorous outside of ethnically centred groups such as the Chinese and Vietnamese. There are around 116 groups across Canada, representing all of the Tibetan lineages. Most groups are located in the provinces of Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia and Nova Scotia. While the large number of groups in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia are unsurprising, given that they have the largest urban centres of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, the large number of groups in Nova Scotia – a proportionally small province by population – is somewhat incongruous. This can largely be explained by the fact that Shambhala International relocated its headquarters there in 1986 at the direction of its founder, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche. For this reason, a large part of the story of Tibetan Buddhism in Canada has to do with this group.

The number of people of Tibetan descent is fairly small, with only 4,275 across Canada according to the 2006 census (Statistics Canada 2006). After the 1959 Tibetan rebellion against Chinese rule, Tibetans by the tens of thousands fled their country. At the request of the Dalai Lama, Canada started accepting Tibetan refugees in 1968. At first, the Tibetans were scattered in small groups around the country but now Tibetans have created stable communities in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver (Haynes 2010, 324).

The vast majority of those practicing Tibetan Buddhism are not Tibetans. Furthermore, there is relatively little interaction among these groups, even in instances where they share facilities (McLellan 1999, 88-94). When facilities are shared, the teachings that are given to Tibetans and non-Tibetans, and the practices in which they engage, are substantially different (Haynes 2010, 328). Nonetheless, they are not entirely isolated, and as Haynes argues, there are exceptional instances that bring the ethnic Tibetan communities together with non-Tibetans practitioners. All groups, for example, come together when important teachers – like HH the Dalai Lama – visit. They are also united by the political goal of the Free Tibet Movement. There are also cultural events that are well attended by members of the Tibetan community as well as by Westerners, such as cultural bazaars and Tibetan New Year (Haynes 2010, 328).

Of the different organizations and lineages, it is Shambhala, founded by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche as a form of Buddhism conducive to Westerners, which is perhaps the largest. It has around thirty centres, monasteries or groups scattered across Canada. Furthermore, Shambhala Buddhism has a special connection with Canada as Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche decided to relocate the headquarters of his organization to Halifax, Nova Scotia, ostensibly because he felt that the cultural surroundings were more conducive to building a practice community than the United States (Soucy 2010, 45-6). Sadly, Chögyam Trungpa died shortly after arriving. However, despite the loss of their guru many of his followers felt compelled to follow through with his wishes (Eldershaw 2010, 246), and more than 500 American and around 100 European devotees subsequently moved to Halifax to be a part of this community. As a consequence, the story of Buddhism in Nova Scotia is primarily the story of Shambhala. All other Buddhist communities are small by comparison – making the largest immigrant/ethnic Buddhist community American rather than Asian.

It was an unlikely place. Halifax, especially at the time, was distinctly not cosmopolitan, with little religious or ethnic diversity. While it once was an important port city, by the 1970s it was economically diminished. It remains the largest city in Atlantic Canada, but Nova Scotia is still considered to be one of the "have-not" provinces in the Canadian federation, and it requires redistributed funds from the richer provinces in central and western Canada to support its infrastructure. It is also a province that many young people feel compelled to leave in order to seek employment opportunities. For the Shambhala followers who needed to support their families, the economic implications of the decision to move were enormous, and some still face substantial obstacles in order to stay in Halifax.

Shambhala Buddhists have played a significant role in Halifax and Nova Scotia. They moved to Halifax because they wanted to live in a place conducive to their practice, but also in a place where they felt they could have an impact. Consequently, Shambalians have been very active in a large number of cultural activities that go well beyond those that are strictly Buddhist and have subsequently had a notable impact on greater Halifax and Nova Scotian society. Some would say they have transformed the city, bringing such things as the very successful Atlantic Film Festival (Swick 1996, 154). They have opened health food stores and ethical businesses. They have been consultants, helping to transform the Nova Scotian economy. They have been professors, teaching Buddhism to university students, and they have helped to set up the *Centre for Spirituality* in the Workplace located at Saint Mary's University. Enlightenment is still the primary goal, but the path is partly through a fuller participation with society rather than retreat from it. Due to the success of Shambhala International, the popularity of the Dalai Lama as well as other groups and schools, Tibetan forms of Buddhism have been extremely popular in Canada, representing probably a larger number of groups and practitioners than any other in Canada (Hori 2010, 28).

Buddhism and Scholarship

Canadian contributions to Buddhist scholarship have stemmed from a variety of sources. Departments of Religion have grown rapidly in North America since the 1960s, providing courses in Buddhism to a large number of undergraduate students. Many of these departments include one or more scholars studying Buddhism, and there is a growing number of academics in Canada directing their research to diverse aspects of Buddhist texts, languages, ideas, art, institutions, practices, philosophy, history, interactions, and adaptations across many cultures and eras. Teaching about other religions besides Christianity has penetrated down to the high school level and the curriculum of some provincial school systems include teaching about Buddhism.

In North America during the last fifty years, many universities have developed formal graduate programs offering the MA and the PhD degree in Buddhist Studies.

The earlier section on Jōdo Shinshū in Canada mentioned the scholarship of Masatoshi Nagatomi and Leslie Kawamura. Another seminal Buddhologist in North America, Richard Robinson, also received formative training from Jōdo Shinshū ministers in Canada – Yutetsu Kawamura in Alberta and later Kenryu Tsuji in Toronto. Robinson "founded the Buddhist Studies program at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, which was the first in North America (Nagatomi's program at Harvard was the second)" (Harding 2010, fn 24, 164). These Canadian Jōdo Shinshū followers were among the most prominent names in the first generation of Buddhist Studies scholars in North America.

Perhaps signaling the beginning of a new trend, Buddhist organizations have started to fund Buddhist scholarship at Canadian universities. The Numata Foundation has for many years supported Buddhist Studies at the University of Calgary, the University of Toronto and at McGill University. The Tung Lin Kok Yuen Foundation has created a chair in Buddhism and Contemporary Society at the University of British Columbia as well as a chair in Buddhist Studies at the University of Toronto, Scarborough. These foundations have helped to subsidize books and sponsor visiting scholars, symposia, and academic conferences, including the recent "Buddhism in Canada: Global Causes, Local Conditions," conference held at the University of British Columbia from October 15-17, 2010.

Although a very young sub-field, studies of Buddhism in Canada are gaining momentum in recent years with a surge of conferences, books and chapters. The quantity of publications remains considerably less than studies focused on Buddhism in America (which typically refers to the United States of America rather than North America as a whole), but the growing body of scholarship is beginning to more fully describe Buddhism in Canada and contribute to larger conversations about religious diversity in Canada, as well as about Buddhism in the West, Modern Buddhism, and Global Buddhism.

Conclusion

In recent decades, Buddhism has been growing rapidly in Canada and the religious landscape has become increasingly multicultural, diverse, and pluralistic. Nonetheless, Buddhists represent a very small percentage of the country's population and Christianity remains the dominant tradition, which competes more directly with secularization than with Islam or Buddhism. After all, Buddhism has been in Canada for little more than a century. This relatively short history – especially in comparison to Buddhism's earlier and more dominant roles in many of the Asian countries described in this volume – suggests it would be surprising if Buddhism were to already exert a major influence on literature, art, culture, and politics throughout Canada. Indeed, this is not yet the case in an obvious or pervasive way. There are notably influences from the now multi-generational Japanese-Canadian Jōdo Shinshū community in southern Alberta to the proliferating Buddhist immigrant and institutional presence of Buddhist temples and organizations in Canada's largest cities. Buddhism certainly has been on the rise in terms of cultural influence throughout North America from the second half of the twentieth century through the present. This rise is often not particular to Canada or easy to localize. At a level of more popular culture, Hollywood films and celebrity endorsements of Buddhism are clearly evident, as are the growing troves of popular books and Buddhist magazines, including *Buddhadharma* and *Shambhala Sun,* which operate out of headquarters in Halifax. These books and magazines inform understandings of Buddhism for practitioners and perspective Buddhists – as well as Canadians with various interests in Buddhism but who would not identify as Buddhist. The proliferation of these resources in combination with the spread of diverse Buddhist temples, growth of local Buddhist communities, and expansion of global Buddhist networks with a Canadian presence all suggest greater breadth and depth in the encounter between Buddhism and multiple dimensions of Canadian society.

The Canadian government's official policy of multiculturalism fosters the acceptance of Buddhism in Canadian society by presenting a much more welcoming home to Buddhists from various countries and traditions. Racist immigration policies that had restricted Asian immigration were replaced in 1967, and the change was met by waves of immigrants that included many Buddhists. The forced relocation of Japanese families seventy years ago is unimaginable in contemporary Canada. In fact, in recent decades Canada's government has officially apologized to Japanese and Japanese-Canadian families who suffered under that unfair policy and for Chinese immigrants who had earlier been made to pay outrageous "head tax" fees to immigrate. These measures are in keeping with Canada's contemporary reputation as a champion of multiculturalism, though they do not represent state support or patronage for Buddhism in particular. For example, there are no state holidays to commemorate Buddhist festivals. However, one recent political act communicated a more direct endorsement of the most recognisable Buddhist in the world today. The Dalai Lama was granted honorary Canadian citizenship in a unanimous vote by the House of Commons in 2006, which made him only the third person to whom Canada's Parliament had granted this honour.

The current state of Buddhism in Canada benefits from rising immigration from countries with large Buddhist populations, growing interest in Buddhism among Canadians who were not raised in the tradition, and governmental policy that embraces multiculturalism. However, there are challenges for Buddhism in Canada as well. Unlike the ongoing immigration from China and Southeast Asia, there is very little Japanese immigration. Japanese Jōdo Shinshū, the heart of Buddhism in Canada for more than half a century, is concerned about its future vitality and has had to close some of its temples due to dwindling numbers and a rising average age among adherents. This pioneer tradition in Canada survived—and even expanded and thrived—during earlier periods of adversity. However, the very success that this multi-generational community has had in integrating into Canadian society presents different types of challenges that continue to be negotiated.

Also, attempts to form umbrella organizations linking diverse Buddhist communities across Canada have had little success as measured by comprehensiveness, longevity, or the commitment of member groups to the larger organization. Finally, the division between "immigrant" and "convert" Buddhist groups seems fairly entrenched most of the time. Although these categories tend to be overemphasized, it has thus far been the case that most communities remain separate or there are parallel communities that interact with each other infrequently. Even global Buddhist organizations such as Tzu Chi or Fo Guang Shan have had little success spreading to membership beyond Chinese ethnic groups despite their impressive international growth. Despite these challenges, it is clear that Buddhism is on the rise in Canada. The extent and rapidity with which Buddhist groups, concepts and concerns will continue to penetrate into mainstream culture remains one of the key questions about the role and future of Buddhism in Canada.

Notes

1 See Coleman (1999, 92; 2001, 14); Fields (1998, 200 & 202); Fronsdal (2002, 285); Prebish (1979, 191; 1999, 63), and; Wallace (2002, 35).

2 See for example the website "Visiting Niagara Falls" (http://www.visiting-niagara-falls.com/chamshantemple.html, accessed 28 Dec. 2010).

3 See the field report on the Montreal Chinese Buddhist Society on the website of the Montreal Religious Sites Project (http://mrsp.mcgill.ca/reports/datasheets/BuddhistSociety.htm, accessed 25 Dec. 2010).

4 The most accessible account of Zen Buddhism in North America is Rick Field's *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America, 3rd ed.* (1992).

5 See the biography by Mauro Peressini, "Albert Low: A Quest for a Truthful Life" (2010).

6 Master Sheng Yen has written his autobiography, *Footprints in the Snow* (2008).

7 There has not been any scholarly review of Samu Sunim's career in North America. However the website of the Buddhist Society for Compassionate Wisdom has a short summary (http://www.zenbuddhisttemple.org/sunim.html, accessed 1 Jan. 2011).

8 See <http://www.zenbuddhistnun.blogspot.com>.

9 <http://www.mahaviharafoundation.com/ accessed 30 Dec. 2010>.

10 <http://www.torontomahavihara.com/ accessed 30 Dec. 2010>.

11 <http://www.dhamma.org/en/goenka.shtml> accessed January 2011.

12 Buddhist monasteries for woman do exist in Sri Lanka where Bhikkhuni order has been recently re-established (although not officially recognized).

13 5.2% of Buddhists identified as "Canadian", which might mean that they are of European or Asian ancestry (Beyer 2010, 115).

14 Only the Atlantic Provinces of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador do not have Vietnamese populations with sizes significant enough to sustain a religious institution.

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VENEZUELA
COLOMBIA
ECUADOR
PERU
BRAZIL
BOLIVIA
PARAGUAY
CHILE
URUGUAY
ARGENTINA

South America

Secred of offering at Khadro Ling Buddhist Temple - Brazil

ESSAY 35

Buddhism in South America

An Overview with Reference to the South American Context

Frank Usarski

Introduction

Compared to research in other parts of the Western Hemisphere, Buddhism in South America[1] is still a rather unexplored issue. Except for Brazil, where there has been a steady increase of related academic activities since the late 1990s[2], and a handful of researchers in Argentina, Ecuador and Venezuela particularly interested in Zen and Soka Gakkai[3], research on Buddhism is absent in South American universities and appears only sporadically on the agendas of associated scientific communities such as the Latin American Association for the Study of Religions (ALER)[4], the Mercosur Religion Social Scientists Association (ACSRM)[5] or the Latin American Association of African and Asian Studies (ALADAA).[6]

The main reason for this is that although Buddhist history dates back to the first half of the nineteenth century, and despite the presence of institutions of virtually any Buddhist branch, Buddhism continues to be a statistically modest part of South America's diversified religious field. In relation to the vast Christian, particularly Catholic majority of the population of the South American countries and their institutional predominance, Buddhism, with around 500,000 practitioners and approximately 600 groups represents a numerically insignificant segment.

Furthermore, and again with the exception of Brazil, useful official statistical data is either missing or incomplete. In most cases the national censuses do not contain any question concerning religion. If there is the rubric "religion" on the census' questionnaire, Buddhism does not explicitly appear in the results but is treated as one of several alternative minorities to the Christian mainstream and therefore subsumed under the headline "other religions"[7].

In the face of these not very auspicious intellectual conditions, this essay is not entitled to deliver an empirically and analytically satisfactory discussion of the history and current state of Buddhism in South America. This is especially true for the first part, which offers a preliminary synoptic approach to Buddhism in South America in general. The latter part is based on a combination of different kinds of references, including academic sources[8], official statistics of religion launched by governmental[9] and research agencies[10], Buddhist directories, estimations of the statistical relevance of Buddhism by continent[11], by country[12] or in a city[13], and homepages run by Buddhists institutions active in South America. Despite the effort to overcome the limitations of isolated sources especially as far as the Spanish speaking countries are concerned, the heuristic value of the collected material suffers from a series of uncertainties. In some cases, obviously inconsistent information makes provisional conclusions even more difficult.[14]

Since research on Buddhism in Brazil is well advanced, the reader can expect more details in the second part of this essay dedicated to a description and interpretation of the situation in the only Portuguese speaking country in South America.

Buddhism in South America: An Overview

There are currently around 600 Buddhist institutions of different size and scope active in South America. A closer look at the list reveals that virtually every Buddhist school has established itself in at least one of the respective countries. Besides "classical" orientated Theravada-circles, Mahayana temples with a Chinese, Japanese, Korean or Vietnamese background, and Vajrayana groups following the teachings of Nyingma-, Kagyu-, Sakya- or Gelugpa-masters, one finds centers representing more recent developments such as the New Kadampa Tradition, followers of Thich Nath Hanh, neo-Buddhist movements within the Nichiren-branch, and institutions without a definitive orientation dedicated to the study and practice of Buddhism in an "ecumenical" sense.

In systematical and geographical terms, however, the spectrum of Buddhists institutions is far from being proportionally segmented. As for systematical disproportions, the strongest divisions are that of Tibetan Buddhists groups representing approximately 27% of the total of institutions established in South America, of Soka Gakkai (25%) and of Zen (22%). On the other hand, Theravada is represented by about twenty local centers (3%). "Ecumenical" Buddhism (around ten local groups) is even less popular.

The main geographical difference consists of the numerical, organizational and substantial significance or even predominance of Brazil in comparison with the

Spanish speaking countries. Due to the existence of approximately 300 centers, dojos, groups and temples and around 230,000 self-declared Buddhists, more than 50% of the Buddhist institutions and around 47% of the South American Buddhists are located in Brazil. This tendency correlates with the fact that Brazil's population (185.7 million in 2010[15]) is nearly as high as the estimated population of the rest of South America.[16]

Zen-Meditation on the top of the Copan-Building in São Paulo

The general statistical strength of the Brazilian Buddhist institutions is reflected in a numerical overweight of certain Buddhist branches. This is true for Amida Buddhism represented in South America by eighty-four temples of which 90% are located in Brazil. Another example is the New Kadampa Tradition with followers in Brazil (more than twenty centers) and in Chile (three local institutions). More striking is the situation of Buddhist branches restricted to Brazil as in the case of Honmon Busuryushu (eleven institutions), Shingon (five) and Tendai (two).

Tendai-Temple in São Paulo, Photo: Rafael Shoji (2004)

For other branches, Brazil plays a crucial administrative and spiritual role in relation to South America as a whole. The Soto-Zen temple Busshinji in the city of São Paulo is not only the spiritual reference for local practitioners but serves as the headquarters in order to expand its activities to neighboring countries and to coordinate the work of the associated Brazilian institutions and a temple in Peru. The same is true for the Hokekyo Temple in São Paulo, which is the South American headquarters of Nichiren-shu. In a similar way, the temple of the International Buddhist Order founded in 1996 in Foz de Iguaçu, a Brazilian city close to Argentina and Paraguay, welcomes adherents from either side of the border.[17] Another example for the logistical significance of Brazil is the Latin America Study Session on Nichiren Buddhism in April 2009 held at the Daisaku Ikeda Culture Center in São Paulo and attended by more than 2,000 Soka Gakkai adherents from all South American countries.[18]

The importance of Brazil for South American Buddhism is also seen with regards to Tibetan Buddhist teachers who are not only venerated by their Brazilian disciples but also have adherents in other South American countries. One example is the Brazilian Gelug monk Segyu Choepel Rinpoche, founder of the Lama Je Tsongkhapa Center in Porto Alegre and a correspondent institution in Buenos Aires. A second example is the Tibetan Nyingma-master Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche, who, after moving his headquarters from California to the South of Brazil in 1994, has opened more than twenty local centers in Brazil, Uruguay and Chile. A third example is the Tibetan Gelugpa-monk Lama Gangchen, founder of the Centro de Dharma da Paz Shi De Choe in São Paulo (1988) as the very first institution of an international religious movement which also includes local groups in Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires.

About 400 of the enlisted South American institutions are run by Mahayana Buddhist branches. The great majority is associated with Japanese Buddhists schools, but there are also temples that represent Chinese or Korean tradition. This high proportion is obviously not an unequivocal indicator of the quantitative significance of the so-called ethnic Buddhism, but it is a reminder that the reconstruction of the past and present of Buddhism in South America would be incomplete without reflection upon the role of Chinese, Japanese and Korean immigration.

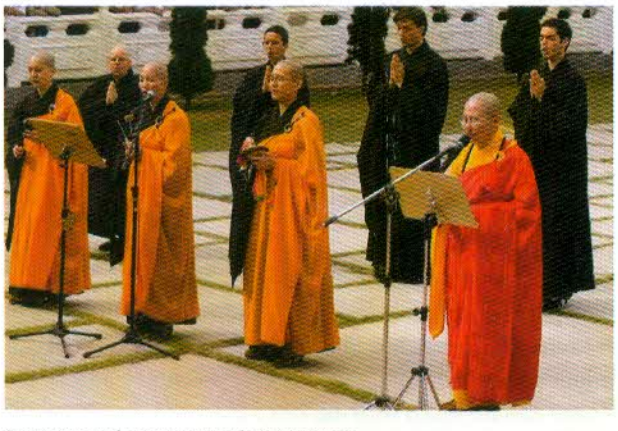
Although Chinese immigration to South America is already documented in the first half of the nineteenth century prior to the arrival of the Japanese, the latter have had a stronger effect on their host societies, especially in Brazil and Peru, and to a lesser extent in Paraguay, Argentina and Bolivia.[19] Korean immigration is more recent and has had only a minor impact on the evolution of Buddhism in South America.

The first Japanese vessel landed in Peru in 1883. Japanese immigration to Argentina and Bolivia started in

1899 and the first arrival of Japanese in Brazil occurred in 1908.

Today, Brazil hosts the largest Japanese community outside Japan. It is estimated that currently 1.3 million Japanese immigrants and their descendants live in the country, far outnumbering Brazilians of Chinese origin (about 150,000)[20]. Next comes Peru where around 80,000 Japanese represent the largest ethnic minority. Around 50,000 are of Chinese origin. In Argentina there currently exists a minority of about 35,000 "japo-argentinos" probably outnumbered by a fast growing Chinese colony.[21] The Bolivian Japanese community is composed of about 12,000 individuals. In Paraguay there currently live around 50,000 Asian immigrants and their descendants, about 10,000 of Japanese origin.

If one generalizes the well-documented statistical decline of ethnic Buddhism in Brazil over the last decades and suppose that other countries have witnessed similar dynamics, then only a relatively small proportion of the enlisted Mahayana-Buddhists should be taken as an indicator of the current relevance of ethnic Buddhism in South America. On the other hand, besides more than eighty ethnic-based Shin-Buddhists communities, there is a series of ethnic Buddhists communities in the region. In this context there are traditional Zen institutions with a strong ethnic background such as the Busshinji Temple in São Paulo and Daishinji Temple in Bogota. Another example is the Tzong Kwan Temple in São Paulo, built with the extensive financial help of the Taiwanese order and the local Chinese community, and which served after its inauguration by the Buddhist master Pu Hsien in 1993 as a model for the construction of two "sister" institutions, one in Argentina the other in Paraguay.[22] In a similar category falls the Fo Kuang Shan-order whose religious activities in countries such as Brazil, Chile, Argentina and Paraguay are supported by local Chinese communities.



Recitation at the Zu-Lai Temple in São Paulo

From an historical point of view the significance of Buddhist immigrants in South America is even more evident. The most obvious cases are that of Peru and Brazil, where Buddhist activities began long before Buddhism attracted a Western audience. In the face of "the tragedy of the initial immigrants", both the Soto Zen and the Jodo branch decided to send official delegations to Peru. Consequently, "the priests, the Revs. Ueno, Masumoto [Zen] and Kinoshita [Jodo] received orders from their respective organizations to go to Peru as missionaries" and "to work in South America among the Japanese immigrants like those who had gone to Hawaii and North America."[23] As far as Brazil is concerned, all Buddhist activities before World War Two were in Japanese "colonies" located in the Federal State of Sao Paulo. The first group that comes to mind is Honmon Butsuryū-shū, whose pioneer, Tomojiro Ibaragi, was among the immigrants that arrived on the first Japanese vessel in 1908.[24]

While the first decades of Buddhism in the region were directly related to Asian immigration, more recent trends gained momentum through a growing number of South Americans who - from the 1960s onwards and parallel to the development in other Western countries - discovered Buddhism as an alternative to their inherited religions, mostly Catholicism. Two tendencies were mainly responsible for these dynamics. On the one hand, Buddhists institutions (for example traditional Zen temples) and movements (such as Soka Gakkai) initially firmly enrooted in a Japanese immigrant milieu, became open to a wider audience and served as a catalyst for the expansion of Buddhism into new sociological contexts. On the other hand, while traveling in the USA or Europe or experiencing workshops and lectures given by roshis and lamas who visited South America, potential converts came into contact with Buddhists approaches already adapted to the mentality and needs of Western religious seekers. Eventually, these alternative settings have given rise to a generation of converts who assumed an active role as Buddhists teachers or as "innovative" members of staff of a traditional ethnic temple or as protagonists of a "globalized" Buddhist branch whose international network of local groups includes centers in South America.

One example of the South American converts who started her career as a minister in a traditional Zen temple is the Brazilian Claudia Souza de Murayama, born in 1947. In 1960, "Monja Coen", as she is called by the Brazilian media, went to San Francisco in order to study Buddhism at the Zen Mountain Center until she moved to Nagoya, Japan, where she underwent long-term monastic training at the Shoboji Temple and finally gained the status of an official Soto-Zen teacher. Back in São Paulo she assumed the leadership of the Busshinji Temple, became a member of the South American Soto-Zen Council and was elected president of the Brazilian Federation of Buddhists Sects [sic!]. Being a Buddhist modernist who sympathized with the inclusion of Buddhists converts into the Busshinji community, Muruyama came into conflict with the order's conservative faction, finally left the Busshinji Temple and founded the Tenzui Zen Dojo as a more convenient spiritual home for Buddhist converts.[25]

Monja Coen

Densho Quintero[26] and Shotai de la Rosa[27] are two Columbian Zen protagonists at the *Daishinji* temple in Bogotá, a traditional institution related to the Soto Zen Buddhist Association of North America. Densho Quintero was ordained as a Soto Zen monk in France in 1987. Since 1989 he has dedicated his time to the propagation of Zen Buddhism in his home country. In 2009 he received dharma tradition in Japan. Today he is the head teacher of the Daishinji. Shotai de la Rosa became a Zen Buddhist in 1989. From the 1990s onwards she first studied Zen under Dokusho Villalba (Spain) and Fausto Taiten Guareshiin (Italy), then in the USA and finally, like Claudia Souza de Murayama, at the Aichi Senmon Niso-doin, Nagoya, Japan.

As with Claudia Souza de Murayama and Shotai de la Rosa, Ricardo Dokyu, born in 1959 in Argentina, went to Nagoya for spiritual reasons. In Japan he was ordained as a Soto-Zen monk (1991) and received dharma transmission (2002). One year later he founded the An Raku Ji Temple in Buenos Aires as well as the Soto Zen Buddhist Association of Argentina (2007).[28] Two other examples in Argentina are Augusto Alcalde and Antonio Eiju Pérez. Augusto Alcalde's interest in Buddhism arouse out of countercultural ambitions in the 1960s[29]. In 1984 he joined the Diamond Sangha in Hawaii and studied Zen under Robert Aitken from whom he finally received dharma transmission. In 1986 he returned to Argentina and founded the Shobo An Zendo in Cordoba, an institution affiliated with the Hawaii Diamond Sangha. Antonio Eiju Pérez is the founder of the Zen-Center in Mendenoza. He started his career as a Zen-Buddhist in 1988. In 1997 he went to Japan where he became a disciple of Roshi Harada Tangen. In 2000 he was ordained as Soto-Zen minister Tenhsin Fletcher at the Zen Mountain Center, California.

As far as Tibetan Buddhism is concerned, an outstanding case is that of the Brazilian Michel Lenz Calmanowitz, who was still a young child when his parents founded the first Institution of the Lama Gangchen Movement in São Paulo. After Lama Gangchen had recognized the boy as a tulku, "Lama Michel" entered the Tibetan Buddhist monastic exile community of Sera Me, South-India and today plays a leading role within the movement.[30]

Less spectacular is the history of the Argentinean convert Gerardo Abboud, born in 1945, today the resident dharma teacher of the Drukpa Kagy Center in Buenos Aires.[31] Abboud began to study and practice Buddhism in the 1970s in India and Nepal. Since then he has dedicated himself to the tradition of Tibetan texts into English and Spanish and to the service of an interpreter on the occasion of workshops and lectures of Tibetan masters during their tours to countries such as including Argentina, Brazil and Chile. In this function he even accompanied the Dalai Lama during his visit to Latin America in 1992.

Finally, there are the considerable number of South American converts who have assumed responsibility for a local center on behalf of a Buddhist movement that operate on an international scale, such as the Association Zen Internationale and Karma Kagyu - present all over South America - the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order in Venezula, Vipassana Meditation groups in the tradition of SN Goenka in Brazil, Peru and Venezuela or the Kwan Um School of Zen and the Order of Interbeing in Brazil.

Buddhism in Brazil: Historical and Socio-demographic Developments

The history of Buddhism in Brazil can be subdivided into four phases. The first roughly dates between 1810 and World War Two. In the respective decades Buddhism was restricted to Asian immigrants and their domestic practices according to inherited traditions. This is not only true for Japanese families who entered the country from 1908 onwards, but – according to reports indicating that the early Chinese immigrants to Brazil[32] maintained their customs and continued to celebrate their annual festivities[33] - probably also for Chinese workers whose initial group had immigrated nearly a century before the vessel Kasato Maru with the first Japanese immigrants on board arrived at the port of Santos.

While informal religious practices and involuntary autonomy at the level of laymen and laywomen was the rule in those days[34], the few efforts to institutionally support the spiritual life of certain colonies must not be forgotten. The first activities that come to mind are associated with the Rev. Tomojiro Ibaragi, who according to the order of the Honmon Butsuryū-shū, was among the first wave of Japanese immigrants. In 1936 he made a name for himself as the founder of the Taisseji Temple in Lins, Brazil's very first official Buddhist institution. The construction of the temple was encouraged by the members of a local nucleus of Honmon Butsuryū-shū practitioners initiated by the layman Yoneji Matsubara in 1932. Soon thereafter, the first Shin Buddhist institution was inaugurated in the city of Cafelandia.[35] Further efforts related to Shin Buddhism were undertaken in the Iguape colony to which the Rev. Masumo Ikoma had been sent by the Honpa Honganji headquarters in 1928. Six years later, the Rev. Shinba introduced Shingon to Brazil.[36]

大宣寺佛遷座式記念撮影

Community of the Taissenji Temple in Lins in 1951

Two more Honmon Butsuryū-shū temples were constructed during the first phase of Brazilian Buddhism, namely the Nissenji in Presidente Prudente (1940) and the Ryushoji in Moji das Cruzes (1941).[37] Finally, one event of a different nature has to be mentioned in the given context: the foundation of the Buddhist Society of Brazil by the Theosophist Lourenço Borges in 1923. As the first association intentionally designed for Western Buddhists, the institution anticipated tendencies characteristic of a later period. In this sense it is paradigmatic that the Buddhist Society of Brazil in its original form was closed after few months, but revived in its current form in 1967[38] under different circumstances.

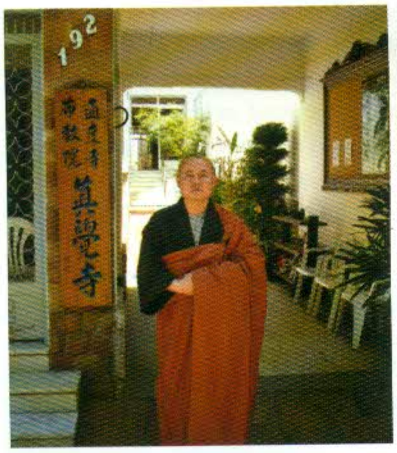
The second period of the history of Buddhism in Brazil took place in the post-war period and was characterized by the establishment of institutions associated with ethnic Buddhist communities. The respective dynamics were particularly stimulated by the intention of the majority of the Japanese to stay on in Brazil. The decision not to return to their country of origin put an end to "experimental immigration" as well as to the immigrants' idea that at home someone else was responsible for the religious affairs of the family until they returned and reassumed their duties.[39] In consequence, a series of Japanese Buddhist institutions was established. Honmon-Busutryu-shu expanded its network of Brazilian temples to Taubaté (1949), Londrina (1950) in the Federal State of São Paulo, and to Itaguaí (1950) in the Federal State of Rio de Janeiro and inaugurated its Brazilian headquarters in the city of São Paulo (1962).[40] In the first half of the 1950s, the Tendai-shū and Ōtani branch of Jōdo Shinshū inaugurated their first temples, the Honpa branch of Jōdo Shinshū founded its national headquarters, and the Jodo, Zen, Nichiren, and Shingon sects announced the official start of their missions in Brazil. In 1958 the Federação das Seitas Budistas no Brasil established itself as a Japanese Buddhist umbrella organization.[41]

Stimulated by the beginning of the internationalization of its then lay-organization Soka Gakkai, and the visit of its president, Ikeda Daisaku, to Brazil, Nichiren Shōshū began to publicly articulate itself in 1960. Brazil's first Chinese Buddhist institution[42], the Mo Ti Temple in Sao Paulo, has existed since 1962.[43]

From a chronological standpoint, the inauguration of the other ethnic Chinese temples, as well as of the only ethnic Korean temple, overlaps with events already characteristic of the third period. Compared to the Mo Ti Temple it took twenty-five years for the local Chinese colony to start with the construction of a second Chinese Buddhist temple, the Kuang Ying in São Paulo, and another five years until the institution opened its doors for the associated community. Only a short time before that, the Zu Lai temple in Cotia was inaugurated (1992), followed by three other Fo Kuang Shan temples in Rio de Janeiro (1996), in Recife (1999) and in Foz de Iguaçu (2000).[44] As for traditional Korean Buddhism there is only the Jin Kak Temple in the city of Sao Paulo, inaugurated in 1988 and belonging to the line of Chogye-Buddhism.

The third phase of Buddhism in Brazil was marked by an intensified interest of intellectual circles in Japanese Buddhism, especially in Soto Zen. This dynamic began to articulate itself in Sao Paulo but was not restricted to this city as proved by similar, although slightly later tendencies, in Brasilia.[45]

Three elements were essential for the new trend. First, one has to consider the repercussion of a positive



Minister of the Jin Kak Temple in São Paulo (Foto: Rafael Shoji 2004

idea of the East and particularly of Japan constructed by the early writings of Brazilian philosophers, novelists, poets, and historians who had dedicated themselves to respective topics out of enthusiasm for the exotic, a romanticizing interest in the Orient, or an intellectual curiosity in a relatively unknown part of the world[46]. Thus, works of authors such as Fagundes Varela (1841-1875), Machado do Assis (1839-1908) Raimundo Correia (1859-1911), Aluisio de Azevedo (1857-1913), Farias Brito (1862-1917), Alexandre Marcos Konder (1904 -1953) or Lourival Nobre de Almeida (1906-1981)[47] had laid the foundation for a favorable image that even resisted the growing resentment of the Brazilian public against Asian immigrants before and during World War Two.[48]

The second factor was the growing knowledge of Zen Buddhism due to newspaper articles and books, including DT Suzuki's Introduction to Zen, the Portuguese version of which was first published in Brazil in 1961.[49]

Third, and most importantly, one has to recognize the catalyst role of Soto-Zen temple Bushinji in São Paulo, which at that time began to show greater openness towards the Brazilian public. The key figure of Soto-Zen was Rosen Takashina Roshi. In 1955, he had visited several Japanese colonies. One year later he was sent again to Brazil, this time due to his order's decision to make him the official head of the Busshinji temple. He remained in this position until 1985.

In 1961, Rosen Takashina Roshi began to organize public zazen-meetings in the Busshinji. From 1971 onwards three or four-day sesshins were periodically held at the temple. Detailed information about the composition of the group of early Western practitioners is not available, but at least some of the Brazilians who made no secrets of their passion for Buddhism are frequently cited in relevant publications. The list contains Brazilian personalities such as the writer Nelson Coelho, the poet Orides Fontela (1940-1998)[50], the physician Maria das Dores Pereira da Silva[51], the psychiatrist Nise da Silveira[52], and the university professor Eduardo Basto de Albuquerque.[53]

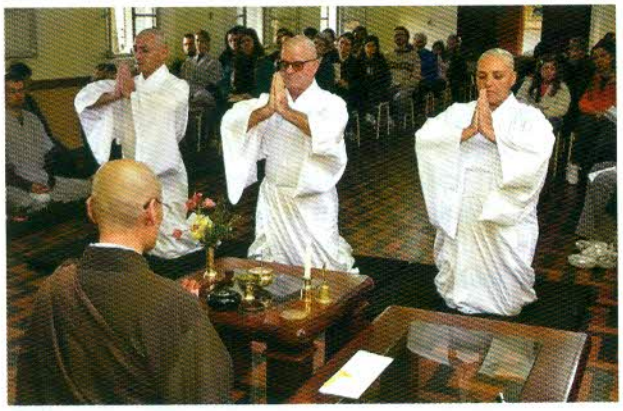
Busshinji-temple in São Paulo

Probably the most renowned representatives of the circle of early Buddhists converts are Murillo Nunes de Azevedo and Ricardo Mário Gonçalves. Azevedo, inspired not only by Buddhism but also by Theosophy, was an engineer but also gave university courses on eastern religions and produced a series of Buddhist writings. Similar is true for Gonçalves who worked full-time as a History Professor at the University of Sao Paulo and besides his commitment to Buddhism was also a Freemason. Both Azevedo and Gonçalves played an outstanding and at the same time peculiar role for the popularization of Japanese Buddhism among a wider Brazilian audience. Due to religious careers that started with Zen, continued with their ordination as Shingon ministers, and ended up with leading positions in the Honpa Hongwanji Temple in Brasilia (Azevedo), and in the Higashi Honganji Temple in Sao Paulo (Gonçalvez), their contribution to the development of a "brazilianized" Buddhism went hand-in-hand with their work as "spiritual mediators" inside traditional Japanese Buddhist institutions.

The fourth phase, characterized by the growing emancipation of Zen from ethnic Japanese settings, as well as the multiplication and substantial diversification of institutions predominantly frequented by Buddhists converts, started in the middle of the 1970s. As in other Western countries these developments profited from spiritual orientations of the counterculture movement and a growing number of publications on Eastern religions. In many cases, the Brazilian audience came in contact with relevant ideas through translations of books from English to Portuguese.[54]

A decisive figure for the sociological manifestations of these tendencies in the context of Buddhism in Brazil was Ryotan Tokuda, another official Soto Zen representative sent to Brazil by the Soto Zen order in 1968. He started his work at Bushinji but was soon dissatisfied with the conservatism of the temple's majority. In 1974 he established, together with a group of Brazilian converts, the retreat center Morro da Vargem in Ibiraçu, in the Federal State of Espírito Santo. Later

Cristiano Bitti, a former participant of the "open" zazen meetings and sesshins in São Paulo, turned out to be an important figure for the Morro da Vargem. During the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s he underwent a long-term monastic Soto training in Japan. Back in Brazil he became the head of Morro da Vargem and has remained in this position until today.



Saikawa Roshi, Sôkan of the Soto School in South America, ordains three Brazilian members of the Zen Community in Florianopolis

In 1984, Tokuda inaugurated a second institution, the retreat center Pico dos Raios in Ouro Preto in the Federal State of Minas Gerais. "Continuing his missionary work among non-Japanese Brazilians," Cristina Rocha writes, "in 1993 Tokuda founded the Zen Center of Planalto, in Brasilia, the federal capital. In the following year, Tokuda and Brazilian practitioners founded the Zen Center of Rio de Janeiro. In 1998, Tokuda established the Serra do Trovao monastery in Minas Gerais state. This monastery was established to be exclusively for the training of new monks and it holds two seven-day monthly retreats."[55]

Another key-figure for the dynamics characteristic for the fourth phase of Brazilian Buddhism was Roshi Moriyama who had been spreading Zen on the United States' west coast before coming to Brazil. Like Tokuda, Moriyama started his spiritual work at Bushinji. Later he had to leave the temple due to incompatibilities between his "globalized" approach to Zen and the conservative attitudes of the temple's hierarchy. From this split resulted two "modernist" Zen centers in Porto Alegre in the State of Rio Grande do Sul.

Parallel to innovative trends in the Zen sector, Soka Gakkai began to grow and evolved from about 150 members of Japanese origin in the 1960 to a geographical widespread and probably in recent times numerically most significant Buddhist branch with a high proportion of members without an ethnic Asian background.[56]

Another trend constitutive for the fourth period of Buddhism in Brazil consists in the spread and increasing attraction of Tibetan Buddhism. In 1988, followers of Tarthang Tulku inaugurated in São Paulo the very first Tibetan Buddhist institution in Brazil: the Tarthang Tulku Nyingma Center. Shortly after, disciples of the Gelugpa monk Lama Gangchen founded the Centro de Dharma Shi De Choe Tsog, also in São Paulo.

In 1993, again in São Paulo, three more Tibetan Buddhists institutions were inaugurated, namely the Thubten Dargye Ling (committed to Geshe Lobsang Tenpa), the Centro Budista Mahabodhi (New Kadampa Tradition) and the Ödsal Ling (inspired by the Nyingma master Chagdud Tulku). In 1995, disciples of Chagdud Tulku inaugurated a temple in Três Coroas, in the Federal State of Rio Grande do Sul, as the movement's future international headquarters and permanent home of Chagdud Gonpa, he until then had lived in northern California. In the following years the Chagdud Tulku-organization established a series of local centers in cities such as Belo Horizonte, Florianopolis, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador and Goiânia.

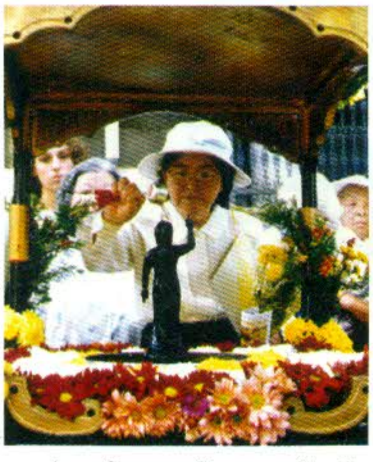
Chagdud Gonpa Khadro Ling in Três Coroas

In addition, during the 1990s a Sakya group in Rio de Janeiro, founded by Sakya Trizin, and two groups (in Cotia, near São Paulo and in the national capital Brasilia), associated with the Kagyu-master Kalu Rinpoche, emerged. One of the most interesting inaugurations in the Tibetan Buddhist sector is that of the Gelugpa Centro Je Tsongkhapa in Porto Alegre (2000). Although the institution is attended by a numerically relatively insignificant group of practitioners, it deserves attention because of its founder, Lama Segyu Rinpoche. The latter is a native Brazilian and was an Umbanda medium in Rio de Janeiro until he was officially recognized as the reincarnation of a sixteenth century tantric master. Today, Lama Segyu is not only the abbot of the Tibetan monastery Sed-Gyued Datsang in Nepal, but also the director of the Healing Buddha Foundation Segyu Gaden Dhargye Ling, in Sebastopol, California[57].

Brazil is the only South American country whose national censuses contain valuable information about the status and dynamics of the religious field. The data ascertained by the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE) include a series of statistics that allow insight into the evolution and current situation of the Buddhist sector. Although the relevant material is methodologically reliable and rich in details, one has to be careful with definite conclusions since “eclecticism is deeply entrenched in the Brazilian psyche”[58] and quantitative statements about adherents are undermined by the fact that exclusive religious commitment is not the rule. With these reservations in mind, the numerical evolution of the Buddhism in Brazil can be summarized as follows.

According to the 2000 National Census 214,873 Brazilians, or approximately 0.14% of the country’s population, are Buddhists. This is a relative insignificant percentage for a religion frequently and often enthusiastically mentioned by the media even compared to religious minorities almost publicly ignored such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses (≈ 0.6%) or the Seventh-Day-Adventists (≈ 0.73%).

Correlation between the questionnaire’s categories “color” (= “race”) and “religion” indicate that the absolute number is composed of 81,345 Brazilians that identified themselves as having “yellow” skin and 133,528 individuals who opted for an alternative item on the respective fivefold scale (besides “yellow”, “white”, “brown”, “black” and “indigenous”).



Religious celebration of the Japanese community in São Paulo, Photo: Frank Usarski (2001)

The first observation regarding these data has to do with “ethnic” Buddhists whose negative numerical evolution becomes evident when one compares the statistic for 2000 (81,345) with the corresponding previous figures. Compared to the results of the National census of 1950 (152,572 “yellow Buddhists”) the subfield witnessed a dramatic decline of about 47% during the second half of the twentieth century.

Complementary empirical data suggest that a strong reason for this tendency consists in the growing indifference of the second and third generation of immigrant families towards the cultural baggage brought to Brazil by their fathers. Already from the post-war years onwards this attitude was not restricted to the negligence of the domestic religious heritage. Rather it has led a considerable proportion of the younger members of the ethnic community (characterized by socio-demographic mobility, the flexibilization of communication patterns in disfavor of the Japanese language and a growing tendency towards intermarriage) to abandon Buddhism and to nominally embrace Catholicism or to join a Protestant church.[59]

In 1941, only 1.5% of Japanese immigrants had declared themselves to be Christian.[60] An empirical study conducted seventeen years later showed how strongly Japanese religions were already “affected by direct and constant contact with the predominant Brazilian religion”.[61] While in 1958 the proportion of Catholics (42.8%) was almost as high as that of Buddhists (44.5%), the study indicated significant differences between age groups and in other demographical factors. 16.6% of the immigrants of the first generation born in Japan had converted to a “Brazilian religion”, the rest had remained faithful to their Japanese religious heritage. For their descendants the situation had changed dramatically. 60.7% declared themselves adherents of a “Brazilian religion”. The second generation (39.3%) was less affected than the third and fourth generation (together 70.3%). A comparison according to age groups showed similar variations. 83.3% of the Japanese older than 44 years but 32.4% of those who at that time were between fifteen and nineteen-years-old were still committed to a Japanese religion.[62]

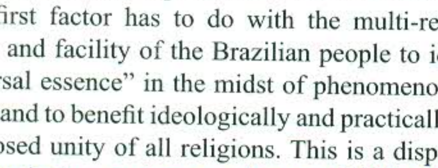
According to the trends indicated above, ethnic Buddhism in Brazil has continued to decline. After a minor loss of 2,939 individuals between 1950 and 1970, the negative numerical tendency gained momentum in the last three decades of the twentieth century during which there was a decrease of 68,288 individuals. More recently, reports about a continuous statistical decline of “ethnic Buddhism” have challenged representatives of traditional Japanese Buddhist communities to overcome the glossing over of the situation. One example of a more realistic attitude is the following question asked by Shôjo Sato, minister of the Honpa Hongwanji Temple in Brasília: “We are not in the position to claim that we have been successful in guaranteeing that our descendants, nisses e sanseis, continue to hold on to Buddhism. What should we do, then, in order to respond to the growing spiritual demand of those who suffer from fragmented, materialistic and stressful daily-life, if they are Japanese descendants or not? What exactly are the correct measures to be taken for our mission in a modern age, particularly in Brazil and in South America of today?”[63]

Reasonable data indicating the evolution of the subfield of conversion Buddhism are available from the 1970s onwards. While the respective national censuses suggest that the number of converts increased constantly until the beginning of the 1990s, the 2000 census showed a considerable general decline of Buddhism caused by a decrease both of ethnic Buddhists and of Buddhist converts. In the first three relevant decades Buddhism statistically uncorrelated with "yellow skin" increased from 49,811 (1970) to 99,622 (1980) and finally reached the number of 146,437 in 1991. In 2000, the total number of Buddhists had dropped from 236,408 to 214,873 including 81,345 ethnic Buddhists (8,626 less than in 1991) and 133,528 "non-yellow" Buddhists (12,909 less than in 1991).

A series of reasons is responsible for the discrepancy between the IBGE-statistics and the public image of an allegedly booming Buddhism in Brazil in terms of a religious alternative for spiritual seekers. Due to formal restrictions, only four aspects are mentioned here.

The first factor has to do with the multi-religious tendency and facility of the Brazilian people to identify a "universal essence" in the midst of phenomenological diversity and to benefit ideologically and practically from the supposed unity of all religions. This is a disposition that favors the harmonious coexistence of different kinds of spiritual approaches but does not necessarily promote a sense of superiority of one's exclusivist religious choice or leads to long-term commitment to a certain community.

A second reason for the difficulties of Buddhism to further expand in Brazil has to do with the popularity and statistical relevance of Kardecism (or Spiritism) especially for the middle-class and higher middle-class, hence for the sociological strata from which in many countries Buddhism wins its Western converts. According to Rodney Starks "cultural-continuity" hypotheses[64], alternative religions are more likely to succeed if their teachings and practices are in tune with the society's dominant religious tradition. Seen from this angle, Kardecism with its combination of Christian theology, cosmology and ethics on the one hand, and elements of Eastern traditions such as karma and rebirth on the other hand, serves as a perfect "filter" for Brazilians who are still committed to Catholicism but unsatisfied with the linear time-conception and the soteriology of official Catholicism without depriving the practitioners of their Christian identity. While a conversion to Buddhism would demand the price of alienation of the dominant religious heritage, Kardecism provides – to a certain extent – similar but far "less expensive" solutions.



The third element is certainly the incapacity of traditional ethnic Buddhist institution to overcome their linguistic limitations and cultural single-mindedness in order to attract a wider audience. This is not only true for Amida-temples whose devotional, family-based Buddhism does not correspond to widespread Western ideals of an individualized meditative Eastern spirituality, but also for older Zen-temples whose rituals of ancestor worship correspond to the demands of their traditional followers but not to the needs of potential converts.

The fourth explanation for the stagnation or even downward trend of Buddhism in Brazil is the institutional undersupply in the greatest part of the country. According to the study of Shoji in 2004[65], Buddhism in Brazil is concentrated in the Federal States of São Paulo (51% of all Buddhists institutions), Rio de Janeiro (11%) and Paraná (10%). That means that the population of the majority of the twenty-seven Federal Unites is institutionally inadequately provisioned or completely deprived of the possibility to come in contact with a local dharma teacher who could convince his audience to follow in his footsteps and guarantee further spiritual assistance on the common path.

Although the number of Brazilian's Buddhists is relatively insignificant, it would be misleading to affirm that Buddhism is an isolated and somehow "alien" religious element in the overwhelmingly Christian country. This is particularly true when one concentrates on the more indirect cultural and social effects of Buddhism. But there are also moments of direct participation of Buddhist entities in affairs of public interest in fields such as socio-politics, public health or economy. Furthermore, one must not forget the many internal activities offered by Buddhists institutions to a wider Brazilian audience.

One of many other cases that stand for the latter aspect is that of the ethnic Chinese Tzong Kwan temple in São Paulo which besides its religious service in a narrow sense offers courses in Ikebanba, Mandarin and Chinese cuisine.[66] One example for the engagement of

Buddhists institutions in affairs of public interest is that of the ethnic Chinese Buddhist Association Chi-Chie. In 1995, members who trained as medical experts joined a group of Brazilian physicians in order to provide a regular and free medical service for the poor. In 1998, the Buddhist Association even founded a diagnostic center for the needy population.[67] A more recent example is that of the Zu Lai temple, recognized by the Brazilian public for its multifold efforts not only in the field of education but also in the health sector.[68]

Regarding a less evident impact of Buddhism on the wider Brazilian society one must not forget the great popularity of martial arts of Asian origin and Buddhist roots among Brazilians with or without an oriental ethnic background. A great part of the older sports academies of the respective category are historically related to Chinese,[69] Japanese and Korean[70] immigration to Brazil.

The situation is similar for the many Haiku associations in the country which, according to Eduardo Basto de Albuquerque, belong to the spectrum of "small and intersecting pathways" through which "Zen entered into Brazilian culture". Over the years, these associations have attracted an increasing number of members outside the Japanese colony indicating an "immense appetite for haiku" among "native Brazilians".[71]

Furthermore, Buddhist ideas and methods play a role in the economic sector, where companies such as Tec-toy, Lachmann and Aços Villares[72] have organized Buddhist workshops in order to promote both harmony among employees and the increase of the firm's productivity.

In many cases, Buddhist ideas and approaches have infiltrated the wider Brazilian society in a subtle and often unnoticeable manner. To understand these dynamics one has to bear in mind the following: one consequence of the reception of Buddhism in the West is the gradual emancipation of beliefs and practices from the institutional bodies which were actively involved in the process of transplantation of Buddhism into occidental settings. In this process, thematically relevant books, magazine articles, movies, documentaries and websites have played an additional role for the ongoing popularization of Buddhism. As a result, and similar to other Western countries, Buddhism in Brazil has in many ways transcended its former sociological boundaries and is now resonating in diffuse surroundings. The latter can be described in terms of a "cultic milieu"[73] or "an audience",[74] distinct from concrete and immediately identifiable forms, such as denominations, "cult movements" or "client cults".

From the perspective of the general public, Buddhist's contents, symbols and approaches originally shaped within a certain cultural context now appear as universal elements of a *perennial wisdom* ready to be spontaneously quoted and applied often without a clear notion of the systematic identity of respective ideas and methods.

One example for this diffusion is the growing number of gyms and fitness centers in Brazil that – in response to the increasing demand of new forms of "personal training" - have incorporated Zen-classes in their weekly routines.[75] Gabriela Bastos Soares goes even one step further by suggesting that Buddhism plays a significant role within the public health sector in the sense of a "tacit" impact. According to her observations, a considerable number of Brazilians engaged in the health sector are inspired by a holistic worldview which - from the standpoint of the respective individuals – is fully compatible with Buddhist principles. Thus, Buddhism is an important issue for the relevant social circles, however not explicitly or in form of a manifest spiritual preference but according to the category of an "invisible religion" introduced by Thomas Luckmann.[76]

Conclusion

Rafael Shoji has argued[77] that the value of the study of Buddhism in his home country not only contributes to a more profound and realistic understanding of the history, current constitution and possible future tendencies of the national religious landscape. Rather, the conclusions drawn from research on Buddhism in a traditionally Catholic country could also play a constructive role within an international academic discourse often guided by an image of Western Buddhism contextualized within a predominantly Protestant culture. If Shoji is right, research on Buddhism in South America has an even greater heuristic potential. At least this is the prospective for the future and as long as the initial course followed in the first part of this essay is taken as a stimulus for a far more profound and detailed study of the history and current status of Buddhism in different parts of South America. This demand includes the commitment to a continuous study of Buddhism in Brazil as well as the permanent revision of conclusions according to new insights. In this sense the next challenge is already ahead: while the present essay is ready to be forwarded to the organizer of this volume, the IBGE is preparing the publication of the results of the 2010 National Census.

Notes

1 In tension with the geo-political reality associated with the expression "South America" (including countries such as Suriname or French Guyana) the present article concentrates on the 10 major countries, that is: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and

Venezuela.

2 Cf. Usarski, Frank: O momento da pesquisa sobre o budismo no Brasil: tendências e questões abertas, *Debates do NER*: 7, n°9 (Jan/Jun) 2006, pp.129-141.

3 I am refering to Caton Carini, Lucia Salinas, and Matilde Viglianchino (Argentina), Lucila Donoso Gómez (Ecuador) and María del Pilar Quintero (Venezuela).

4 One rare example is the paper "Budismos 'latinos': la presencia del budismo en Latinoamérica y el Sur de Europa" presented by Francisco Díez de Velasco at the 13th ALER Congress (2010) n Granada, Spain [sic!].

5 One rare example is the paper "Fragmentación geográfica, comunidades emergentes y globalización en el budismo argentino" presented by Catón Carini at the 14th ACSRM-Congress (2007). In Buenos Aires.

6 One rare example is the paper "Encuentros y desencuentros en el diálogo cristiano-budista. La situación en Chile" presented by Gonzalo Ulloa-Rübke (Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, Chile), at the 10th Interrnational ALAADA-Congress (2000), Rio de Janeiro.

7 Cf. for example, CEIL/CONICET: *Primera encuesta sobre Creencias y actitudes religiosas en Argentina*, Buenos Aires: CEIL/CONICET 2008.

8 Cf., for example, Shoji, Rafael: *The Nativization of East Asian Buddhism in Brazil*, PhD Thesis, University of Hannover, 2004.

9 Concerning Chile, Peru and Bolivia cf. Comision Nacional del XVII Censo de Poblacion y vi de Vivienda: *Censo 2002. Sintesis de Resultados*, Santiago de Chile: Empresa Periodística La Nación 2003, pp.25-27; Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI): *Censo de Poblacion y Vivienda* 2007, http://iinei.inei.gob.pe/iinei/ RedatamCpv2007.asp?ori=R (accessed 22/01/2011); Ministerio de relaciones exteriores y cultos: Registro nacional de culto – asociaciones religiosas no católicas, http://www.rree.gob.bo/webmre/documentos/servicios/d27.pdf, (accessed 11/01/2011).

10 Cf. PROLADES: *A Directory of Religious Groups in Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina*, San Pedro: Prolades 2002.

11 Cf., for example, Markham, Ian S. (ed.): *A World Religions Reader*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996, pp.356-357.

12 Cf., for example, http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/rel_bud_by_cou_bud_bud_tot-religion-buddhism-country-buddhist-total, accessed 23/01/2011; http://www.budismo.com/directorios/index.php, (accessed 23/02/2011).

13 Cf, for example, Mallimaci, Fortunato; Cárdenas, Luis A. (eds.): *Guia de la diversidad religiosa de Buenos Aires*, vol.2, Buenos Aires: Biblos 2003; Costa, Néstor da: Chiappara, Carla, Albanés, Lorena (eds.): *Guía de la diversidad religiosa de Montevideo*, Montevideo: Taurus 2008

14 See the dramatically discrepant numbers of Buddhist adherents in Bolivia given by worldiQ.com (8,857) [cf. http://www.wordiq.com/definition/Buddhism_by_country (accessed 15/01/2011)] and Wikipedia (23,710) [cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism_by_country (accessed 15/01/2011)].

15 According to the last census realized by the Brazilian Institute for Geographic and Statistics, cf. http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/presidencia/noticias/noticia_visualiza.php?id_noticia=1744&id_pagina=1.

16 Reference:https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html, (accessed 15/01/2011)

17 Cf. Shoj, Rafael: Reinterpretação do Budismo Chinês e Coreano no Brasil, *Revista de Estudos da Religião*, 3, vol 4, 2004, pp. 74-87, especially pp. 79-80.

18 Cf.http://www.sgi.org/news/events/events2009/events090412.html(accessed 03/02/2011).

19 If not indicated otherwise the following information are based on Levinson, David: *Ethnic Groups Worldwide: A Ready Reference Handbook*. Phoenix: Oryx 1988; Sowell, Thomas: *Migrations and Cultures: A World View*. New York: Basic Books 1996; Lesser, Jeffrey: Asians in South America, in *Encyclopedia of World Cultures*, vol. VII New York/London: G.K.Hall/ Prentice Hall 1994, pp.58-61; *Encyclopedia of Latin America. Volume IV: The Age of Globalization*, New York: Facts on File 2010, p.170.

20 Cf. SHANG-SHENG, Chu. Imigrantes e Imigração Chinesa no Rio de Janeiro (1910-1990). *Leituras da HISTÓRIA*, no. 17 (fevereiro), 2009, pp.44-53.

21 Estimations are confusing and vary between 30,000 in 2000 [cf. KUMAGAI, Satoru: *Comparing the Networks of Ethnic Japanese and Ethnic Chinese in International Trade*, IDE Discussion Paper No. 113, Institute of Developing economies 2007, http://202.244.105.132/English/Publish/Download/ Dp/pdf/113.pdf, (acessed 25/01/2011)] and 120,000 in 2010 [cf. Cf. Sânchez, Gonzalo: La communidad china em el país se duplicó enm los últimos 5 años, *portal clarin.com*, November 27th 2010, http://www.clarin.com/sociedad/comunidad-china-duplico-ultimos-anos_0_343165728.html, (accessed 25/01/2011)].

22 Cf. Shoj, Rafael: Reinterpretação do Budismo Chinês e Coreano no Brasil, op.cit.

23 Ota, Hirohito: The First Buddhist Missionaries in Peru – An Unknown Centennial History, *Dharma Eye*, n° 12, August 2003, http://global.sotozen-net.or.jp/pdf/dharma-eye/de12/de12_08.htm, (accessed 15/12/2010).

24 Cf. Nakamaki, Hirochika: *Japanese Religions at Home and Abroad. Anthropological Perspectives*. London and New York: Routledge Curzon 2003, pp.143-167.

25 Cf. Rosha, Cristina: *Zen in Brazil. The Quest for Cosmopolitan Modernity*, Honululu: University of Hawai'i Press 2006, pp.50-54.

26 Cf. http://sweepingzen.com/2009/12/24/1470/, (accessed 25/01/2011).

27 Cf.. http://sweepingzen.com/2009/12/23/shotai-de-la-rosa-bio/ (accessed 25/01/2011).

28 Cf. *Asociación Budista Soto Zen Argentina*, no1, vol.1, (August) 2009, http://cnargentina.com.ar/ files/boletin1.pdf, (accessed 27/12/2010).

29 Zen in South America - An Interview with Augusto Alcalde, Roshi by Vladimir Keremidschieff, *Moon Mind Circle*, Autumn 1992, online ftp://coombs.anu.edu.au/coombspapers/otherarchives/electronic-buddhist-archives/buddhism-zen/information/south-american-zen.txt,(accessed 30/12/2010).

30 Cf. Usarski, Frank: (Re)Making Tradition in an International Tibetan Buddhist Movement: A Lesson from Lama Gangchen and Lama Michel, in: Engler, Steven; Grieve, Gregory P. (eds.): *Historicizing "Tradition" in the Study of Religion*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 2005, pp.345-355.

31 Cf. *http://www.dongyuling.com.ar/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=20&Itemid=36,* (accessed 18/12/2010).

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38 Cf.http://www.sociedadebudistadobrasil.org/quem-somos/historia, accessed 25/01/2011.

39 Cf. Maeyama, Takashi: *O imigrante e a Religião. Estudo de uma Seita Religiosa Japonesa em São Paulo*, Master Thesis, São Paulo: Fundação Escola de Sociologia e Politica 1967, pp.78 ff.

40 Cf. Como foi fundada a HBS no Brasil, op.cit.

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55 Cf. Rocha, Cristina Moreira da: Catholicism and Zen Buddhism, op.cit, p.255.

56 Already in 2000 there were approximately more than 100,000 Soka Gakkai members in Brazil of whom 80% were ethnically unrelated to the Japanese colony. Cf, Pereira, Ronan Alves: *O Budismo Leigo da Soka Gakkai no Brasil: da revolução humana à utopia mundial*. PhD-Thesis, Campinas, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2001, pp.281 f.

57 Cf. Simões, Maria: Psicologia budista no ambiente empresarial, Entrevista: Segyu Choepel Rinpoche, *T&D, Desenvolvendo pessoais*, March 2000, pp.8-11.

58 Cf. Carpenter, Robert T.; Roof, Wade Clark: The Transplantation of Seicho-no-ie from Japan to Brazil: Moving Beyond the Ethnic Enclave, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol.10, No.1 1995, pp.41-54, especially p.48.

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60 Cf. Fuji, Yukio, T.Lynn Smith: *The Aculturation of the Japanese Immigrants in Brazil*, Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press 1959, p.14.

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76 Cf. Soares, Gabriela Bastos: *O biopoder na contemporaneidade: o espírito do corpo e a alternativa budista*, PhD-Thesis, Rio de Janeiro: Universidade do Rio de Janeiro 2004, especially pp. 122ff.

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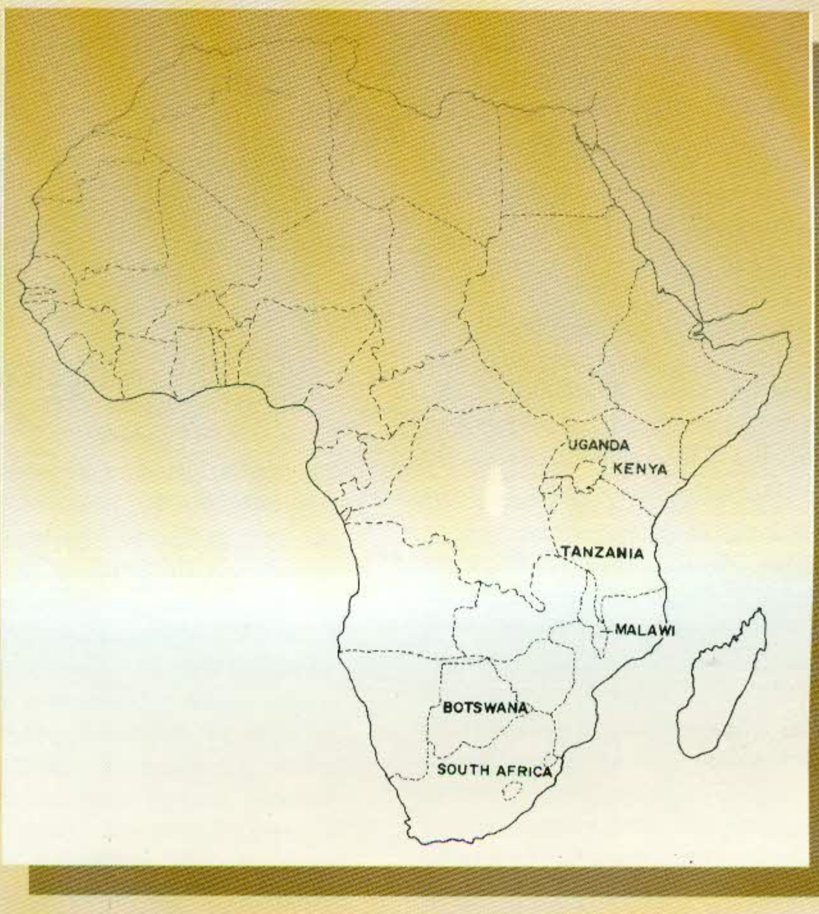

UGANDA
KENYA
TANZANIA
MALAWI
BOTSWANA
SOUTH AFRICA

Africa

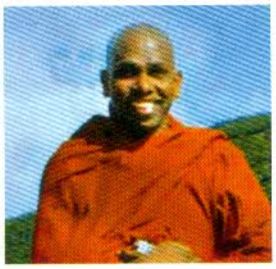
ESSAY 36

Buddhism in Africa

Ven. Bhikkhu Buddharakkhita

Introduction

Ven. Buddharakkhita



Ven. Pannasekera

After Asia, Africa is the world's second largest and second most populous continent. It has fifty-three countries with a total population of 552 million. Out of these fifty-three, at least ten have different sects of Buddhism. However, six countries, namely Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Malawi, and Botswana, have the most Buddhist activities. Although Buddhism, as a major world religion, is practiced in Africa, most of the Buddhist communities live in southern Africa. While there has been some conversion among Africans, most of the Buddhists in Africa are of Asian descent, generally Chinese, Vietnamese or Japanese. Interestingly, 0.01% of South Africa's population is Buddhist. There have also been cases of some high profile celebrities converting to Buddhism such as Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje, a famous Nigerian actor.[1]

This essay presents a detailed account on how Buddhism was introduced into different parts of Africa. It explores the development of Buddhism up to the present day, covering all schools of Buddhism, places of worship and eminent Buddhist religious figures. Furthermore, the essay offers a detailed account on Buddhist literature, studies, scholars, education, institutions and art. Some insights are given on the cultural, social, economic and political implications of Buddhism in African countries with specific examples. Buddhist culture provides fundamental values that are compatible with existing African traditions and values. Buddha's teachings have the potential to be assimilated by different cultural and social norms without conflict.

Also, this account provides an excursion into the relevance of Buddhism in Africa; to get to know the extent of Buddhist contributions to Africa and the African contribution to Buddhism. It is hoped that this exploration will shake off common African beliefs such as, "Buddhism is an Eastern thing, for Asians only". Furthermore, this writer will discuss the current state of Buddhism, state patronage, and support groups.

Finally, this essay reveals the problems and challenges facing Buddhism and measures to be taken to overcome such problems, which will enable further development. Though Buddhism is still new in Africa, there is great potential for its development given the huge suffering on the continent and its need to achieve peace and freedom.

Buddhism in Africa

Africa comprises fifty-three countries with a population of 552. Out of these countries, at least ten have different Buddhist sects. This section presents a detailed account of how Buddhism was introduced to different parts of the continent. Buddhism is still relatively new in Africa, so there is great potential for its growth and development because there is much suffering among Africans. Most countries in Africa have experienced some kind of war, political friction, and tribal clashes. There is a great need to achieve inner peace and freedom. Buddhism offers a direct path that leads to ultimate peace.

South Africa

Despite its marginal status in South Africa, Buddhism does have a surprisingly long history in the country. The first known Buddhists to visit were three Thai monks shipwrecked at Cape Town in 1686. Apart from various Buddhist groups brought to the Cape Colony from southeast Asia during the sixteenth century, and the many indentured labourers brought to Natal province from India during the latter part of the nineteenth century (some of whom were Buddhists, and some of whom were Hindu who later converted to Buddhism once in South Africa), most Buddhists in South Africa are African converts, not Asians. Various Buddhist groups grew up in the major cities from the 1970s, and there has been a proliferation of distinct Buddhist traditions since the mid-1980s.[2]

The first Buddhist centre in Durban was started by Dr Luis Van Loon and opened to the public on May 7, 1980. It has been developed as a tranquil place to practice and study philosophy, meditation, and Buddhist arts. The Retreat Centre encourages the practice of moral codes during retreats. Since 1980, many other Buddhist centers

Bodhi tree in Tanzania planted in 1920

have been started in other places with different traditions of Buddhism. For example, the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order has erected Nan Hua Temple, supported by Taiwanese Buddhist devotees. It is the largest Buddhist temple and monastery in Africa, situated in the town of Bronkhorstspruit near Pretoria.

Tanzania

In 1920, Buddhism was established by the first Sri Lankan Buddhists to arrive in Tanzania. They established and registered the Buddhist Association in Dar es Salaam. At that time, there were approximately 450 Sri Lankan Buddhists who were working there. In the beginning, the Sri Lankans worked together under the umbrella of the Sinhalese Buddhist Association. Later on, they bought some land from the Tanzanian government. A Mr Gunapala brought a seedling of a Bodhi tree from Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka which was planted in 1920. The Buddhist Association hall was built in 1927, and is now a historical monument. Tanzania, therefore, has the oldest Buddhist temple in Africa.[3]

Godwin Samararatne

Botswana

Around 1970, Buddhism was established in Botswana by some Sri Lankans. The community gradually increased and started to work together regarding religious, cultural and national affairs. Some group meditation classes were arranged and on many occasions the late Godwin Samararatne, a Sri Lankan lay devotee and teacher, used to help expand meditation skills. Mr Uttum Corea and Mrs Dinky Corea decided to establish a Buddhist centre on their private land in Gaborone.

Malawi

Buddhism in Malawi was introduced by forming the Amitofo Care Centre (ACC) in 2001 and registering it as a non-government organization in 2003.The ACC is working in the district of Chiradzulu and in the Mapanga area of Blantyre City and is related to the Fo Kuang Shan Temple in South Africa. After starting Buddhist activities in South Africa, Master Hui Lee, a member of the Nan Hua temple there, visited Malawi in order to find some students and encourage them to enroll at an African Buddhist seminary. During that time he had the idea of establishing a Buddhist Centre in Malawi.

Kenya

Buddhism in Kenya was established in 1999 by the George Phylnormel Foundation in memory of Mr George Phylnormel and Mrs Norma Perera. It is the only Theravada Buddhist Centre in Kenya, located in the Nairobi suburb of Loresho near the University of Agriculture.

Uganda

Buddhism in Uganda can be traced to the establishment of the Uganda Buddhist Centre by the Ven. Buddharakkhita (a native Ugandan Theravada monk) in April 2005 at Kawempe, Kampala.[4] At the beginning, a rented space and sometimes a 'mobile temple' in the form of a monks' tent was used for Buddhist services. In early February 2006, the Uganda Buddhist Centre acquired a new property on a hillside overlooking Lake Victoria. The Centre is a short distance from Kampala (the Ugandan capital) and Entebbe International airport. It is a major initiative in the heart of Africa, which intends to provide the first stable source of the original teaching of the Buddha within the African cultural context.

Development of Buddhism

It is estimated that the number of Buddhists in Africa is 194,550 or 0.02%[5] *of the number of Buddhists in the world. In this section, the development of Buddhism until the present day is explored. Buddhism is always developed through peaceful conviction not brutal conversion. This simple yet profound approach of spreading Buddhism has been admired throughout its history. Some African countries, for example Uganda, have developed Buddhism by establishing a community of monastics. Other countries such as South Africa have a well-*

developed network of lay teachers and followers. Many countries have developed Buddhism through education and social work, thus sensitizing their local community by imparting Buddhist practices. Some eminent Buddhist figures are mentioned to inform the reader of dedicated Buddhist leaders.

South Africa

South Africa has the most developed Buddhist activities, the most recent, and with the greatest impact, being the establishment of Nan Hua Temple.[6] Situated on fifteen hectares of land donated to the Taiwanese Fo Guang Shan (Pure Land) Buddhist Order by the Bronkhorstspruit City Council in 1992, the temple is the first and only Buddhist seminary and the largest Buddhist temple in Africa.[7] Activities encompassed include an African Buddhist seminary which has trained novice monks from other African countries. The Taiwanese community came to South Africa to establish a temple and other related centres. Thereafter, they began their outreach projects, religious work and social services in Malawi.

There are many schools of Buddhism in South Africa, namely:

- The Buddhist Retreat Centre in Ixopo, KwaZulu-Natal
- The Nichiren Buddhist lay group Soka Gakkai International (SGI) which has a community centre in Parkwood, Johannesburg
- The Derivatives of Korean Zen in the Western Cape
- The Vipassana Association of South Africa, founded by SN Goenka, which holds meditation retreats in the Western Cape
- The Shambala, Diamond Way Buddhism (an alternative Karma Kagyu lineage) and New Kadampa traditions are some of the most recent additions to the collection of Buddhist schools

Some of the most eminent Buddhist leaders are lay teachers and include:

- Leela Verity, founder and Director of Sat Chit Anand [8]
- Kittisaro, a Rhodes Scholar from Tennessee who spent fifteen years as a monk in the Forest School of Ajahn Chah. He has taught internationally for twenty years and recently completed his second year-long self-retreat [9]
- Tantissara, a teacher at the Buddhist Retreat Centre in Ixopo, KwaZulu-Natal
- Rob Nairn, a Buddhist teacher, author and populariser
- Heila and Rodney Downey, students of Zen Master Seung Sahn
- Jennifer Woodhull, a student of Pema Chödrön [10]

Tanzania

The recent development of Buddhism in Tanzania has been spearheaded by the Ven. Pannasekera. Historically, Buddhism had an early start in this region when the Ven. Lokanatha came to Tanzania with Mr Gunapala in 1920. After another forty-two years, the Ven. Palane Narada became the second Buddhist monk to come to Tanzania. There was no resident monk in Tanzania until 1983, the first being the late Ven. P. Vipassi Thero. Afterwards, different monks came from time to time.

The Ven. I Pannasekara arrived in 1998 and has been instrumental in the development of Buddhism until now. Some of the activities include (but are not limited to) meditation classes conducted every Sunday where the normal attendance is around twenty students, and a nursery school for poor local students. The temple is open every day for prayers, and on Sunday mornings to all people interested in meditation.

The Ven. Panasekara is the prominent Buddhist leader in Tanzania and helped to complete a multipurpose hall in 2000. He is the chief monk of the Tanzania Buddhist Temple. "He continues to offer a wide range of services in many African countries and all over the world." [11]

Kenya

Buddhist development activities in Kenya are carried out by the Theravada Buddhist Centre, which was built on a half-acre plot and includes a house for resident monks, a shrine, a meditation hall, a pagoda, two small Bodhi trees and a helper's quarters. The residence is a two-storey building fully equipped to meet all of the monks' living needs. There is a meditation room housing a Buddha statue brought from Sri Lanka. The centre is also used as a base for social work by the Ven. Wimala who has commented: "In my travels to rural Kenya, I donated wheelchairs, crutches, and prosthetic limbs to children in outlying villages". [12] Bhante Wimala, a Sri Lankan-born Buddhist monk, is the most prominent Buddhist leader in Kenya and the chief monk of Kenya.

Botswana

In Botswana the Buddhist Vihara was started by the Botswana Buddhist Association which was established in 1990. The temple premises house two big Buddha statues. The first, erected on June 29, 1992, by Uttum Corea, was made in Sri Lanka. The second statue was brought from Thailand by ten Thai monks and Thai devotees and erected on June 29, 1996. It was placed inside the temple after a blessing ceremony. The monks' resident temple has two small rooms, a kitchen, bathroom, toilet and sitting room.

Two monks can easily be accommodated. However, there is currently no prominent Buddhist leader, though from time to time they do get a visiting teacher.

Malawi

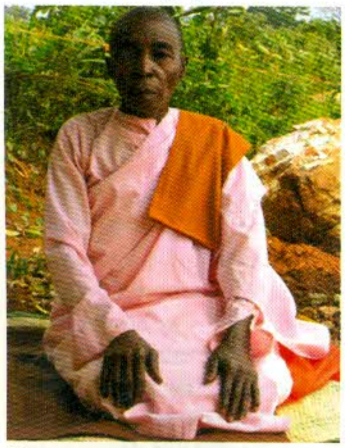
The development of Buddhism in Malawi is undertaken by the Amitofo Care Centre. It has a Buddhist shrine, Bodhi tree, meditation hall and monks' residence. There are two monks who have graduated from the African Buddhist seminary and two lay devotes who assist with religious and social services. The temple has around 100 Buddhist Sri Lankan devotees who often attend religious services, meditation and other programmes. They also care for and improve the quality of life of people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. The centre has an assembly hall, administration block, clinic, a warehouse and staff housing. The complex also includes a meditation centre and a Buddhist shrine.

The centre supports 200 orphans currently living in various childrens' homes throughout Malawi. It makes donations of clothing, shoes, food and much else besides. It works closely with twelve health clinics' HIV/AIDS support groups in the Chiradzulu District. Additionally, the centre operates a Buddhist Sunday school and Buddhist temple in Mapanga.

The most prominent Buddhist leader is Master Hui Lee, who was born in Taiwan and has been tagged the 'African monk'. In the early 1990s, he founded the ACC for African orphans and is still its residing chairperson. His enthusiasm and big heart bring love and care to the orphans.[13] He has devoted his entire life to Africa and has vowed to be reborn five times as a monk in Africa in order to establish orphanages on the whole of the continent.

Uganda

The Uganda Buddhist Centre is a major initiative to secure a firm and lasting spiritual home for Buddhist teachings and practices in the country. Such an establishment for the study and practice of Theravada Buddhism has created the first Buddhist centre in Uganda, thereby significantly increasing the Buddhist presence in Africa.



Nun

The centre has a meditation hall with a capacity of 100 people. Currently, there are fifteen Ugandans who have converted to Buddhism and taken the five precepts or training guidelines. In addition, there are traditional Buddhists: seven Thais, one Burmese and forty-five Sri Lankans who live and work in Uganda. The development of this first Buddhist temple continues, and we hope that it will serve the spiritual needs of the Buddhist communities in Uganda and in neighbouring African countries.

The most prominent Buddhist leader is the Ven. Bhikkhu Buddharakkhita. He was born and brought up in Uganda and introduced the structured practice and study of Buddhism in his native country. When he is in Uganda, he leads meditation retreats at weekends. The Ven. Buddharakkhita received the international award of the Supreme Buddhist leader in Uganda at the World Buddhist Summit, Kobe City, Japan. The second religious figure is a Buddhist nun, Dharmakama, ("one who loves the Dharma"). She is the Ven. Buddharakkhita's mother, and was ordained at the Uganda Buddhist Centre on October 17, 2008. When she donned the Burmese pink robes, she became the first Theravada native African Buddhist nun.

Buddhist Studies, Scholars, Education, Institutions and Art

This section offers an account of some Buddhist education institutions which have recently emerged. Secondly, a few examples of African Buddhist scholars are mentioned along with their respective roles. There is a brief account of a few known examples of Buddhist literature in Africa, some of which have been translated into local languages such as "Luganda", "Chichewa" and "Swahili". Some of the Buddhist literature has been authored by an African Buddhist monk and lay teachers. Finally, some of the finest examples of Buddhist art are presented, such us the Dhamma wheel and the Buddha statue.

Buddhist Education and Institution

South Africa has the largest Buddhist education institution in Africa. The African Buddhist Seminary (ABS) was established by the Ven. Hui Li to realize the compassionate vow of Master Hsing Yun, "Let us bring the Buddha's light to the three realms so that the Dharma waters may flow throughout the five continents".

The Fo Guang Shan Nan Hua Temple African Buddhist Seminary began recruiting students in October 1994. By the year 2001, 164 students from Brazil, Israel, Congo Brazzaville, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, New Zealand, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe have studied Buddhism at the seminary. Students who come to the seminary live as temporary novice monks for three years. The objective of the seminary is to provide people of all nations with an environment to develop their full potential. Emphasis is also placed on teaching the students valuable skills that they can use throughout their lives. The seminary places equal importance on teaching the Buddhist Dharma as well as its practical application. Novices gain theoretical knowledge as well as practical and social skills necessary for leading tranquil, pure, unselfish and productive lives. [14]

Buddhist Literature

Most of the Buddhist literature has been published in South Africa. However, some Buddhists from other African countries have translated and authored books. For example, in Uganda, there is one book, *How to Practice Buddhism?* by the late Ven. Dr K Sri Dhammananda and published by the Buddhist Maha Vihara in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which has been translated into Luganda, the country's main vernacular language. The translation was by Nicholas K Ssewanyana and Tom Kyembe and edited by the Ven. Buddharakkhita.

In Tanzania, there are four Dharma books that have been translated into Swahili and some that have been translated into Malawian languages. Kenya's the Ven. Wimala has written *Compassion in Action*. There is a book of Buddhism in Africa by the Ven. Pannasekara. The Ven. Buddharakkhita from Uganda has written *Planting the Seeds of Dharma - the Emergence of Buddhism in Africa*, which was published by Vihara in English, French and Mandarin and is being translated into Portuguese, Thai and Burmese. The book describes the author's Dharma activities in Uganda.

Buddhist Art

The Buddha showed us the path of right living, a pathway to peace. In fact, the life of the Buddha is the greatest work of art. Buddhist art reflects the teaching of the Buddha and provides a visual focus for contemplation. It acts as a reminder when we are caught up in our worldly lives. When he passed away, the Buddha adjured his monks that Buddhist artists must "strive on".[15]

Dharma Wheel

The Uganda Buddhist Centre has the ultimate image of Buddhist art, the Dharma wheel. It represents the first sermon given by Buddha to his first five disciples. The Dharma wheel has been placed right on the top at the entrance to the Uganda Buddhist Meditation Hall. It has eight spokes, each representing a mental state in the noble eightfold path, i.e. right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. This Dharma wheel serves as a reminder to all our visitors and residents of the path to peace, happiness and final liberation.

The Buddha Statue

In Uganda, the Buddhist temple houses a bronze Buddha statue called "Mirembe" Buddha, which means "Peace" Buddha in the Luganda language. It was donated by a group of generous devotees from Thailand and has distinctive African facial features. The Buddha statue is a symbol of perfection of human potential, final enlightenment or ultimate peace and happiness. The Peace Buddha statue symbolizes the bringing of the Buddha's peaceful teachings to Africa, a continent which has, in the past, been torn by tribal antagonism, wars and political turmoil. The Peace Buddha sits on a beautifully decorated gilded stand (throne), Burmese-style (indeed custom-made in Burma.) It was offered as a gift by the Burmese community in the Bay Area, California, headed by the Ven. Ashin U Osadha.

Cultural and Political Implications of Buddhism

This section explores how Buddhism found a place in African culture. Buddhism comes with a cultural richness. Throughout history Buddhism has absorbed the culture of the land where it has come to be practiced. Perhaps the time has come to establish African Buddhism. I wish to introduce Buddhism within the context of Africa culture. After exploring the cultural implications, next are its political implications. The Buddha never recommended his followers to belong to any one political system. However, he offered some basic guidelines to those who chose to engage in politics. He gave advice to political leaders or kings and their duties towards their citizens.

Cultural Implications

Interestingly, some of our African culture bears some similarities to Buddhist culture. According to the Sigalovada discourse on domestic and social relations, the Buddha outlined the harmonious relations by way of reciprocity. Some of the striking examples are:

Childrens' support for their parents: Children are informed that they must perform duties to assist their parents.[16] In another discourse on blessings, the Buddha said that supporting one's parents is one of the greatest blessings. Likewise, in African culture, children are taught to help their parents, for example washing clothes and to clean and tidy the house.

Looking after the family inheritance: Buddhist culture encourages one to look after the family inheritance, not squander it. In African culture, we value family inheritance and any person that squanders it is always admonished. Traditionally, the oldest son or person in the family becomes the successor to ensure that the inheritance is well looked after. However, in rare cases, the youngest person is chosen. Usually, the successor is selected according to their good behaviour and the prospect of being able to take care of the inheritance.

Buddhist interconnectedness with families, other people and everyday life: Teaching people that they are dependent on their ancestors is something dear to African culture. Ugandans value being more than themselves, i.e. their sense of belonging to nature and family is far more important than how they regard themselves - people always ask, "Whose child are you?"They are not seen as individual entities but the entities of their family's origins. Our agricultural economy also humbles us before season and nature as we depend on nature. This interdependency is nicely captured by the word "Ubuntu", which is an ethical or humanist philosophy focusing on people's allegiances and relations with each other [17] and is shared by other African cultures of Bantu origin.

According to Archbishop Desmond Tutu: "One of the sayings in our country (South Africa) is 'Ubuntu' - the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you cannot exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can't be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality - Ubuntu - you are known for your generosity. We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world. When you do well, it spreads out; it benefits the whole of humanity."

The extended family system prevailing in African culture generates a feeling of interconnectedness. In Buddhism, we are enjoined to feel at one with all beings. Other Buddhist teachings on generosity, forgiveness, and loving-kindness towards others are also an integral part of our African culture.

Political Implications

The political teachings of the Buddha can be applied to improve existing political systems which are impregnated with deep-seated roots of greed, hatred, delusion and fear. Certainly, all actions that spring from such misguided systems have often led to suffering in Africa. For instance, Uganda had its share in the past political turmoil: "The colonial boundaries created by Britain to delimit Uganda grouped together a wide range of ethnic groups with different political systems and cultures. These differences prevented the establishment of a working political community after independence was achieved in 1962. The dictatorial regime of Idi Amin (1971-79) was responsible for the deaths of some 300,000 opponents; guerrilla war and human rights abuses under Milton Obote (1980-85) claimed at least another 100,000 lives."[18]

The Buddha never recommended that his followers belong to any one political system. Instead, he offered some basic guidelines should we choose to engage in politics. He also gave advice to political leaders/kings regarding their duties towards their citizens. These basic guidelines can be applied by any ruler or leader irrespective of their political party or affiliation. In the Jataka, the Buddha gave ten rules for good governance known as the "Dasa Raja Dharma".[19]

Buddhist Contributions and Contribution to Buddhism

This section examines the Buddhist contribution to African societies. Buddhism has uplifted the social relationships among the people who uphold Buddhist precepts such as abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, taking intoxicants and drugs that lead to negligence. These precepts when undertaken individually can collectively lead to national security and safety. The Buddhist contribution to the African economy is also explored. This is followed by an examination of the African contribution to Buddhism. Finally, instances are cited where a Buddhist monk offers Buddhist lectures in predominantly Christian Universities.

Buddhist Contribution to African Society

Buddhism has contributed to the social growth and development of African societies. According to Buddhism, a society in made up of families. And a family is made up of individuals. In order for social transformation to take place, an individual must undertake a minimum of five precepts: abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, taking intoxicants and drugs that lead to negligence. In other words, one has to develop the wholesome inner qualities of heart and mind corresponding to these rules of restraint:

Loving-friendship and Compassion for all Living Beings

The practice of non-harming has reduced the rate of violence where Buddhism is practiced. For instance in Uganda, our Buddhist followers gave up killing living beings. In 2006, while standing together with the chief of the village, a rat ran near us. The chief began to chase it and as he was about to kill it, my nephew (who had just learned taken the precept of not killing living beings) shouted at him, "We Buddhists never kill". The chief suddenly stopped and the life of the rat saved!

Generosity

It is a very important practice for social transformation and bonding. In Buddhism, generosity is practiced in order to overcome craving and attachment which creates individual stress, social ills, and personal or inter-personal conflict such as wars and tribal clashes.

Faithfulness to Marital Vows

Many countries in Africa have a problem of HIV/AIDS. Certainly, people who are faithful to their spouses have been socially transformed into living a happy and peaceful life.

Truthfulness and Honesty

Buddhism teaches the Dharma, the Truth. And telling the truth leads to trustworthiness among other fellow beings. By being honest in ones' dealings, one can improve on both personal and inter-personal relationships.

Mindfulness and Sobriety of Mind

When the mind is clear and not clouded by intoxicants, it can be used in creative and constructive ways such as to perform wholesome deeds like mediation which in turn can heal all sorts of mental diseases. In Uganda, most of the Buddhist followers have reported a general improvement in their happiness since they joined Buddhism.

According to the Buddha, by practicing the five precepts such as preserving life, one yields many benefits: for instance one gives an intangible gift of fearlessness and freedom to all living beings and as a result, one enjoys the same benefit of freedom, safety, and fearless. Certainly, one contributes to both personal and national security. By protecting oneself, one protects others and vice-versa. African leaders need to uphold these moral values, in order to reduce or eliminate government-spending on natural security and law enforcement authorities.

Buddhist Contribution to the African Economy

Buddhism has offered many employment opportunities to all people without discrimination but for the welfare and benefit of all. With the establishment of Buddhist school, universities, temple, orphanages and other development project in various parts of Africa, many jobs have been created for the local people. For instance, in Uganda, it is said that there are thousands of graduates who pour onto the streets every year but cannot find jobs. Statistics from the labour department show that 390,000 students who finish tertiary education each year have only 8,000 jobs to fight for. This means that for every one job that is available they are about fifty people to fill it. Statistics from all government departments point to a major job crisis in Uganda. According to the labour force flow figures at the Uganda Investment Authority (UIA) and the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), of the more than 400,000 Ugandans who enter the labour market each year, only about 113,000 are absorbed in formal employment, leaving the rest to join the informal sector. [20]

Rural areas account for about eighty-five per cent of the labour force involved in agriculture and other informal activities. The presence of the Uganda Buddhist Centre has created employment opportunities in our community and the surrounding areas. We found that many people around the temple were unemployed due to government regulation on fishing activities in the nearby fishing village. Once we began the construction of the Meditation Centre, many local builders were employed. We have created many jobs and revenues for the construction business such as hardware stores.

How to Earn and Distribute Wealth?

Buddhist teaching on how to acquire wealth and how to distribute it had a potential contribution to the economy of African countries.

Earning one's Wealth

The Buddha said that one should earn a living, whether by farming, trading, cattle herding, serving in the civil service, or by any craft, and that a person should be skillful and not lazy. A person should have a sharp inquiring mind as to the ways and means to accomplish the tasks. "Acquisition of wealth should not be acquired by exploitation, but through effort and intelligent action; it should be acquired in a morally sound way." [21]

Many people in Africa have an attitude of "getting rich fast, overnight riches". In many ways, this kind of attitude leads to the exploitation of natural resources such as forests, minerals and other beings in favour of short-term benefits. Buddhism offers a few guidelines on how to earn ones' wealth in a moral way.

The Buddha gave advice on how to earn wealth through diligence like the bee collecting nectar from the flower. "The bee uses nectar to make honey yet when the bee collects nectar without hurting the flower". In fact, the bee cross-pollinates the flower. Both the bee and flower mutually benefit.

Distributing one's Wealth

When one's wealth accrues like a termites' mound, the expenditures should be planned in a skillful and balanced way. According to Buddhism, the proper use of wealth should be: (i) to support oneself and one's family; (ii) to support one's friends or associates; (iii) to set aside some wealth for contingencies such as warding off calamities arising from fire, floods, thieves and so on;

(iv) to perform the five oblations to relatives, guests, the dead, kings and heavenly beings (*devas*); (v) to offer the virtuous, the restrained, followers of the holy life such as priests, monastics and contemplatives who abstain from intoxicants and heedlessness." [22]

Generally in Africa, and specifically in Uganda, the attitude of sharing ones' wealth with family and friends is expected. However, many Africans squander their wealth by living luxurious life styles beyond their means. The Buddha's teaching on economics can contribute to one's understanding of the proper way of distributing one's wealth and leading a balanced livelihood.

African Contribution to Buddhism

There are several people in Africa who have contributed to Buddhism. I will just mention a few of them. In Uganda, the Venerable Buddharakkhita has imparted Buddhist values to the people in our community by example and precept. Through the Buddha's teaching on compassion and loving friendliness, the local people have become friends, supporters and followers at the temple. The local people are beginning to gain faith and confidence in the Dharma. A couple of years ago, for instance, a borehole was installed at the temple and many people from our local community can now gain access to clean water. By offering clean drinkable water to the local community, we practice generosity and compassion. Certainly, Buddhism has contributed to their well-being. The local people have learned the teaching of generosity and as a result they have donated some handicrafts to the temple, a kind gesture from our neighbours.

Propagation of the Dhamma at an Institute of Higher Learning

The Ven. Buddharakkhita delivered a public lecture on Buddhism at Makerere University, Kampala in 2005. Interestingly, over 200 students attended this lecture on the theme "The Nature of Buddhism and its Significance in Africa." During the lecture, it was mentioned that the causes of human misery and suffering are greed, hatred and delusion. The way out of misery and suffering is to abandon these traits. After the lecture, one student sent me a note (rather a kind of ultimatum) that said, "Dear Sir, The source of suffering is the devil. So, once you accept Jesus Christ, together with his father, God, then you will attain happiness. I advise you to accept salvation in order to attain happiness which is not found in your small gods." [23] A Buddhist believes that he or she is responsible for their choices; salvation or attainment of Nibbàna will come only from within oneself.

In early February 2011, the Ven. Buddharakkhita presented a paper on Buddhism and Science at the Uganda Christian University, Mukono, Uganda. In the presentation, the similarities between Buddhism and Science, and the differences between Buddhism and Science were highlighted. The audience of university professors and students of comparative religions appreciated the scientific approach of Buddhism.

In Malawi, the Ven. Hui Lee has been instrumental in the spreading of Buddhism through the outstanding Amitofo Care Centre (ACC). "It was founded and directed by Buddhist clergy from the East who were determined to rear and care for African orphans within an humanitarian and educational umbrella. The main principles of ACC are based on local African culture, Chinese culture and Buddhist philosophy. This is a unique and remarkable characteristic of ACC although it must be stressed that none of the orphans have taken refuge in Buddhism, as we respect their religious freedom and will allow them to choose their own religions as they enter adulthood. The ACC's caring programs has spread from one location to a number of African countries benefiting thousands of children and adults alike. ACC's compassionate and philanthropic footprints have been left not only in South Africa but also in Swaziland, Burkina Faso, Chad, Gambia, Nigeria, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Cameroon." [24]

Current State of Buddhism, State Patronage and Support Groups

In this section the current trends of Buddhism, both for the ethnic Buddhist and the converted Buddhist, are examined. With specific reference to Uganda, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are considered in order to highlight the current state of Buddhism. Compassionate programmes like insight meditation retreats are aimed at making Buddhism known at both the local and national level. As regards state patronage, there is still a long way to go before recognition is granted by any African government.

Current state of Buddhism in Uganda

The number of Ugandan Buddhists has increased slowly since 2005. The first five Buddhist followers were mostly family members, including my mother. Our number increased to eleven by 2006, and by 2010, local Ugandan Buddhist totaled fifteen. More recently, several more Buddhists have joined us. Of course, there are many more Ugandan residents who are Buddhists and come from countries like Thailand and Sri Lanka. The centre's educational practices and community projects include local, regional and international Buddhist students and practitioners. Many expatriates and foreign visitors to Uganda are Buddhists. However, while the number of local Ugandan Buddhists is relatively low, the new temple is increasing the awareness of Buddhism and meditation practice. For instance, our insight meditation (vipassana) retreat (November 19-21, 2010) was attended by twelve expatriates living in Uganda.

Unfortunately, there is no state patronage and no publically-supported groups for Buddhism in Uganda. However, we have some kind of association with the Royal Family of the Tooro Kingdom. Due to our friendship and connection, HM King Oyo of Tooro, was invited to attend the World Supreme Buddhist Conference organized by the World Buddhist Summit, Japan. Certainly, the World Buddhist Summit is our major support group since I became an official member in 2008.

The "SWOT-analysis" can be used here in order to generate a lucid picture of the Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats facing the Uganda Buddhist Centre. This, in turn, gives us a clearer picture of the current state Buddhism in Uganda.

Fig 1: A SWOT-analysis of the Uganda Buddhist Centre, Entebbe, Uganda.

Strengths

- The only Buddhist temple in Uganda with a founding African monk who leads meditation programmes and thus attracts both local and international practitioners.
- Its proximity to the airport and its beautiful quiet environment makes it conducive to realize our aims and objectives.

Weaknesses

- The UBC is not yet self-sufficient and sustainable due to lack of human and financial resources.
- Some people who associate with UBC have no vision and are motivated purely by the desire to go overseas to seek greener pastures.
- Transport problems for local visitors without vehicles.
- The UBC has few volunteer staff. Those who have skills are not willing to offer them and other Ugandan Buddhist members have very limited skills.

Opportunities

- As the first Buddhist centre in Uganda, it serves as a model to introduce the original teaching of the Buddha, establish meditation centres and branches across Africa, and establish schools that teach the Dharma curriculum.

Threats

- Due to lack of Dharma education in the local community, most people associate Buddhism with witchcraft and thus have a fearful negative image of Buddhism.
- Some people have hidden agendas believing, for example, that UBC can lead to greener pastures.

Problems and Measures to be Taken for Further Development

Present Challenges Facing Buddhism in Africa

There are general and specific challenges facing specific countries regarding the spreading of Buddhism.

In Malawi, the expansion of Buddhism face challenges such as communication barriers. The Taiwanese and Chinese staffs who are the programme providers and donors do not speak local languages like Chichewa. There is a great need to teach the staff local languages. Also, the existing local religions, traditions and culture in Africa encourage eating meat, yet the Amitofo Care Centre in Malawi, has a Chinese Mahayana ("Great Vehicle") tradition that discourages eating meat. Thus, the local Malawians advocate that the children in the orphanages should eat meat.

Some specific challenges facing Buddhism in Tanzania include lack of support for its projects and activities. For instance, there is a need to improve the library with more books and facilities. There is a general lack of medicine and health services; lack of drinking water, houses, food, clothes, schools and other important necessities. There is a need to arrange many social services to help needy people. The Ven. Pannasekara believes the temple had about 400 Buddhist devotees in 1927. Since then, the number has dwindled to nearly thirty to forty people. It is very difficult to run the temple without help from outside. We have to help the resident monk maintain the temple. [25]

Returning to the general challenges facing Buddhism in Africa, I will draw most of the information from both my personal experience and discussion with other Buddhist monks like the Ven. Pannasekara. These general challenges include:

Lack of Dharma Teachers

There are few Dharma teachers in South Africa (Sri Lankan, Burmese and Thai monks and South African teachers). However, the other four countries where we found Theravada Buddhism have few or no Dharma teachers. For instance, in Uganda, there is only one Buddhist monk. In Kenya, sometimes there is one monk from Sri Lanka. In Tanzania, there is one monk and sometimes two monks from Sri Lanka. In Botswana, there is no monk at all. One of the solutions, at least, in the short run, is to "import" experienced Dharma teachers and learned monastics to teach in these temples until we train the local people. Personally, I have extended invitations to monastics to come and stay at our temple and teach. Also, we need to send local students to enroll at some Buddhist schools, colleges, universities and monasteries overseas so that they can return to Africa and begin spreading the Dharma.

Financial Challenges

Normally, when a community from a traditional Buddhist country needs a Buddhist temple for its spiritual activities, people simply come and offer their time and effort to build it. Support from the community is voluntarily and spontaneously offered out of a deep appreciation for the value and effectiveness of the Buddha's teachings. Usually, in such countries, active fund raising is not needed. However, since African countries are not traditional Buddhist countries, the establishment of the Buddhist Centre found support primarily from Asian Buddhist communities overseas. Thus, there is lack of financial support from the local community in order to carry out the Dharma activities. For instance, in Uganda, the local Buddhist devotees still live from hand to mouth. They are either poor or do not understand the importance of generosity. Therefore, they cannot afford to support the Dharma activities. Most of the times, they expect the temple to help them out of their financial problem. Some of the people, who show up at the Uganda Buddhist Centre, are looking for money to start their own lucrative business, instead of contributing to the temple. Some people who are well-off have little or no knowledge about the practice of generosity. A partial solution would be to preach the role of generosity as a foundation for spiritual growth and development. Another solution would be to create jobs for the locals to work at the temple while encouraging others devotees to practice generosity by volunteering. To some extent, the Uganda Buddhist Centre has been successful in creating jobs for the local community. The centre purchased a motorbike to help the temple while creating one job for the new local Buddhist. It is important for the temple to establish an endowment fund for the purpose of sustainability. Also, there is a need for local and international fundraisers.

Difficulty to Teach Non-harming and Non-killing

I went to submit my application to register the Uganda Buddhist Centre as a non-government organization at the Regional District Commissioner (RDC) offices in Wakiso. One officer asked, "What are some of your practices?" [26]

I told him, "Lay people observe five precepts, and one of them is not to kill living beings". (I thought that he would be impressed by pure ethical conduct).

But he frowned and said, "You mean cannot defend yourself and your country. I do not like your religion." I thought he was going to refuse to register our organisation. But he processed our papers and took them to the Regional District Commissioner who suspected that I might be mentally disturbed. But, he went ahead and signed the paper hesitatingly. Today's Africa evolved from an ancient hunting culture. Therefore, it is very difficult to teach the Buddhist precept of non-violence, not killing animals. However, after teaching Africans the Sublime Dharma, many have begun to value the life of other living beings.

Lack of Self-reliance

In Africa, most of the people believe that God is responsible for everything: their life and death, success and failures, food and drinks, profit and loss, and rainfall and sunshine. It is very difficult to introduce a new Buddhist philosophy on self-reliance and the law of cause and effect, which seem to contradict with African well-established beliefs. Even some people who have just learnt about Buddhism, often 'smuggle' in some terms from Christianity. For example, one person said, "Thank the Buddha for giving us this chance to see you again." There is a great need to educate people about of impersonal laws causes and effects which have nothing to do with God. From my personal observation, not so many Africans are ready to understand some of the principles of Buddhism as captured by the catechism of Buddhism: " Buddhism teaches perfect goodness and wisdom without a personal god; the highest knowledge without revelation; a moral world order and just retribution, carried out with necessity by reason of the laws of nature and of our own being; continued existence without an immortal soul; possibility of eternal bliss without a local heaven; the possibility of redemption without a vicarious redeemer; salvation in which everyone is his own savior, and which can be attained in this life without prayers, sacrifices, penance and ceremonies, without ordained priest, without the mediation of saints and without divine grace." [27]

Misconception of Buddhism and Buddhist Religious Objects

One morning, while going for alms in Africa, I was carrying my alms bowl, and on the way, I met a group of ladies carrying baskets. They stopped me and greeted me, "How you are?" Suddenly, one of the ladies started frowning at me. She looked very scared and said, "I am afraid of the bomb you are carrying." Later on she asked, "Is that really a bomb?"

"No!" I said, as I opened my alms bowl while a handful of them surrounded me. I then explained that it was an alms bowl. When I completely opened it, the lady shouted, "Oh…! It is empty!" I said, "It is just full of air!"

I had been spreading the Buddha's peaceful message, but somehow the message was mistaken for bombs! [28]

One of the ways to dispel the misconception of Buddhism is to make a documentary about Buddhist activities in Uganda and Africa. Such a documentary once finished and shown to the general public, will increase public awareness about Buddhism.

Lack of Networking with Other Buddhist Organizations

Buddhism in Africa is still new and has not yet established good networking with the rest of the Buddhist world. We would like to focus on is developing relationships with other Buddhist organizations, regardless of tradition. As the Buddha said, so long as monks hold regular and frequent assemblies, meet and break up in harmony, and carry out their business in harmony, they may be expected to prosper and not decline. We would like to be connected to all Buddhist traditions and work together. Unfortunately, Buddhists in East Africa and other African countries are not yet working together. Each centre works individually to promote the aims and objectives of its temple. I do hope that we can cooperate with each other and develop outreach programmes in Africa. We need to join hands and spread the Dhamma in Africa. As the English sayings goes, "United we stand, divided we fall." I believe that if the Buddhist community in Africa and worldwide works together, supports each other and propagates Buddhism in Africa and throughout the world, we will succeed in our Dhamma mission in Africa. We hope to seek cooperation with other Buddhist organisations like the Association of Theravada Buddhist Universities, World Buddhist Fellowship, World Buddhist Summit and others.

Conclusion

The propagation of Buddhism in Africa takes great courage, determination and patience. Many people in Africa believe in different religions and a different concept of Buddhism. Sometimes they smuggle some words from their other religion and use them in Buddhism. Our African cultural and tribal religion bears some similarities with Buddhism. We need to establish Buddhist schools, colleges and universities in Africa that will teach Buddhism in the African socio-cultural context. Buddhism has a great potential to expand to all other African countries provided that the local people embrace it and join the monastic community. Let us work together and make sure that Buddhism expands to the whole African continent.

May all beings be well, happy and peaceful!

Notes

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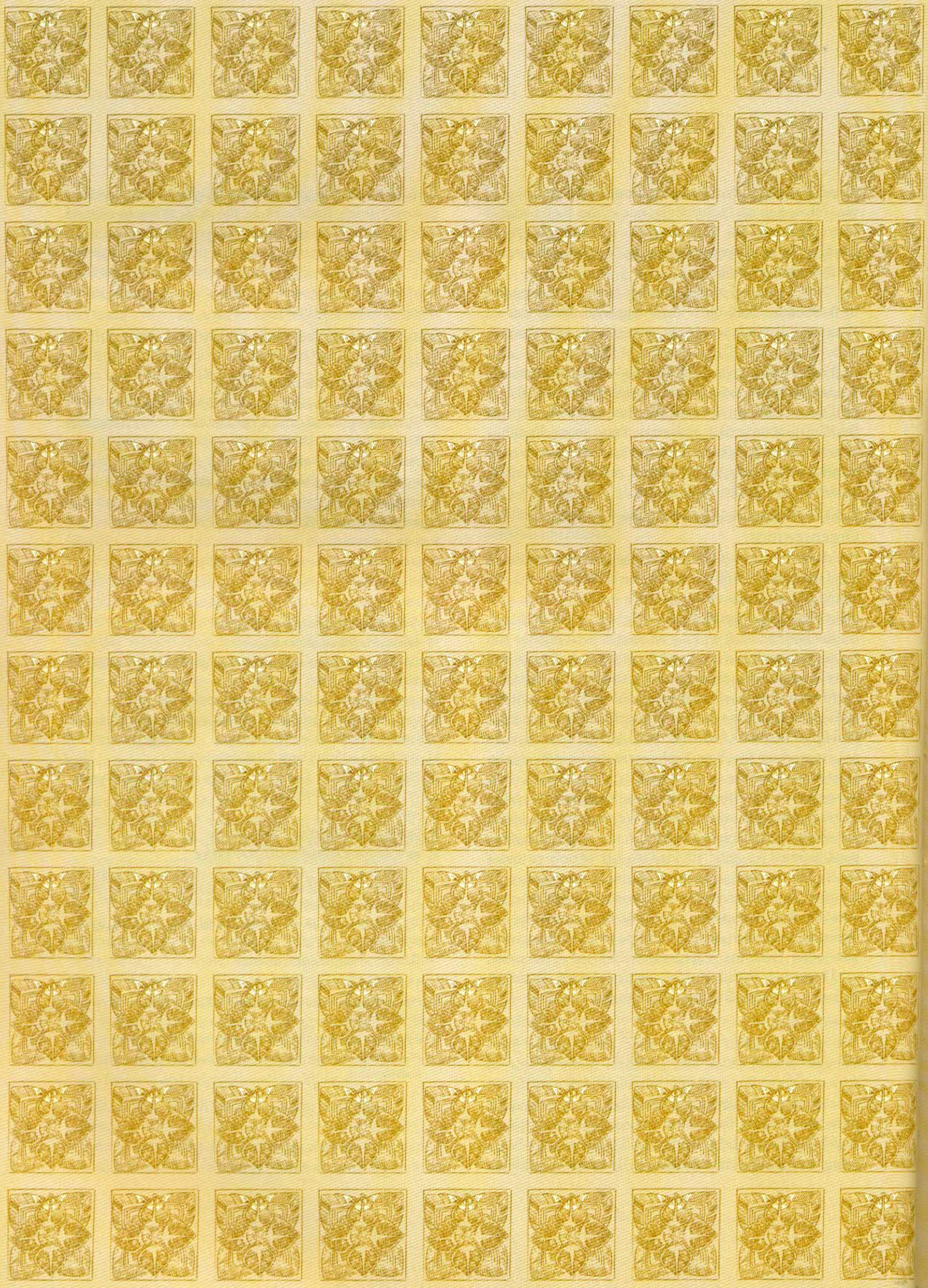

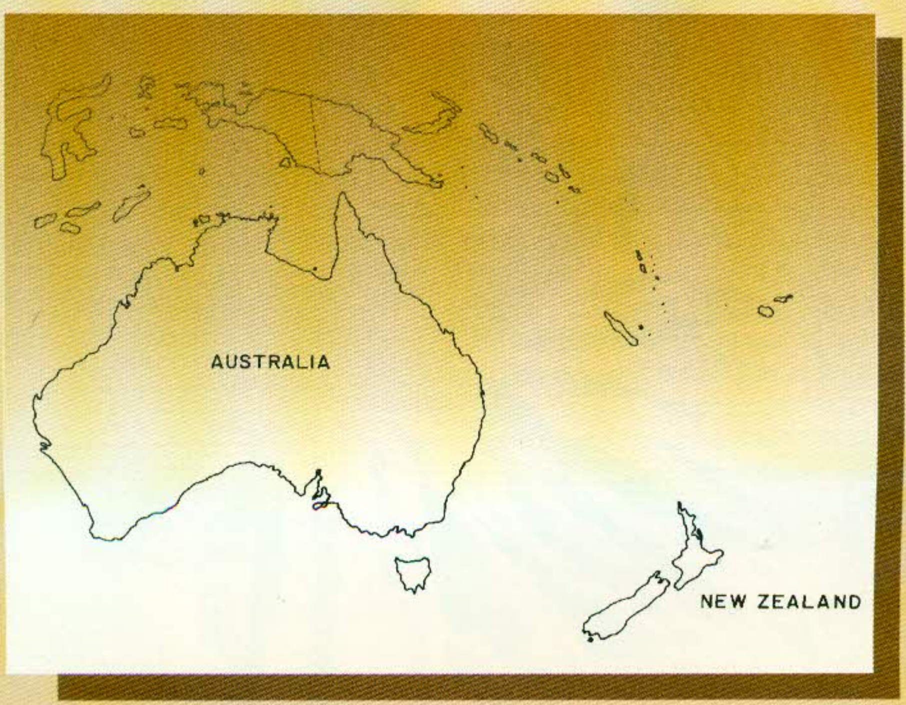
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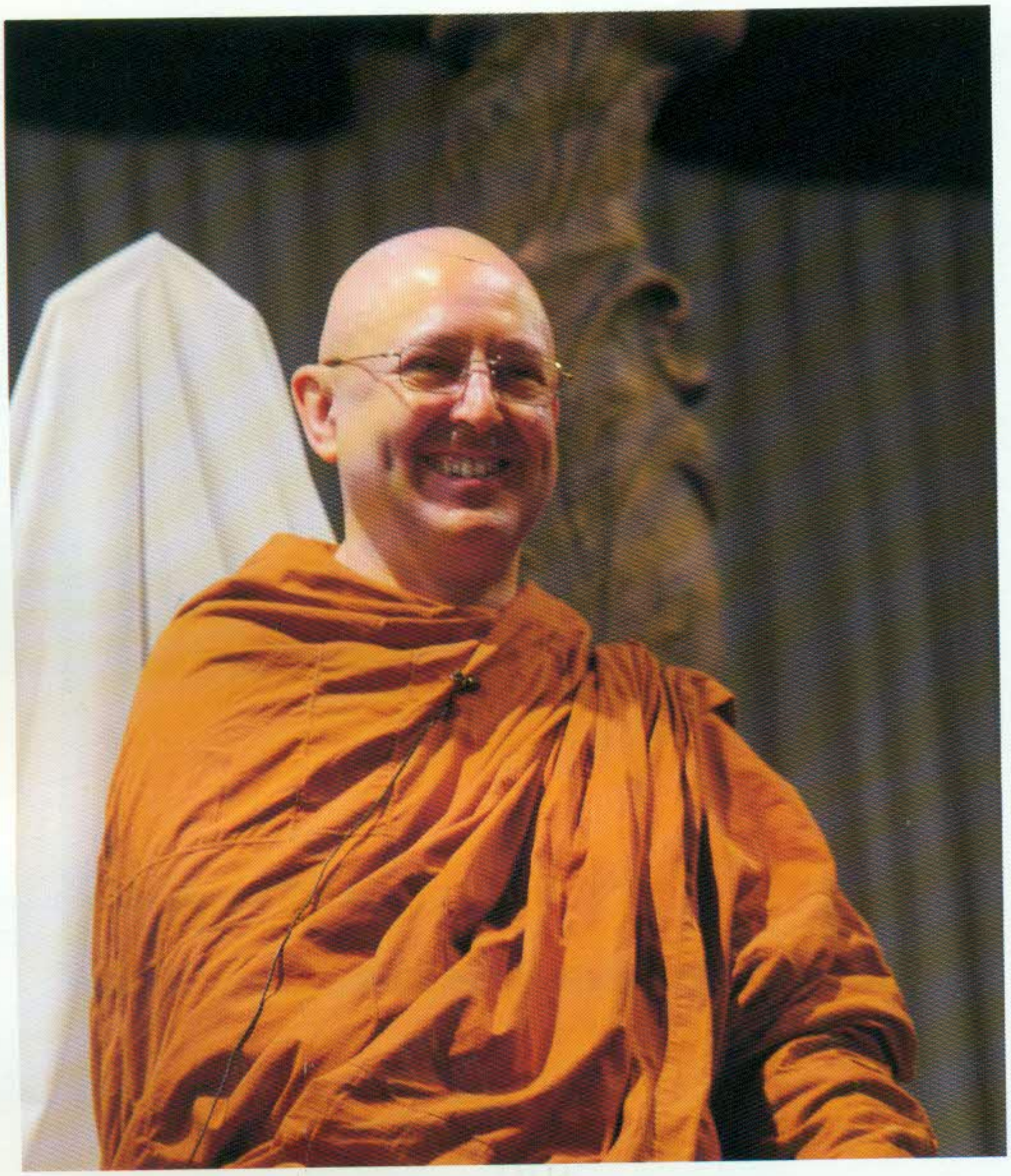

Ajahn Brahmavamso Thera

Procession around Ajahn Chah's memorial statue

ESSAY 37

Buddhism in Australia and New Zealand

Antipodean Dharma

Michelle Barker and Sally McAra

Introduction

In 2002 a group of Tibetan monks created a sand mandala in the Aotea Centre, a performing arts and events centre in Auckland, New Zealand. The final occasion in the event was, as usual, a dissolution ceremony, in which the elaborate, colourful sand patterns are swept up and then taken to a nearby body of water, where they are ceremonially tipped into the water as a blessing. Before the dissolution began, however, various speeches were given. Among the speakers was a man of Maori ancestry, who addressed the monks in the Maori language, following traditional speech-making protocols. It is now a conventional part of public welcoming ceremonies for various dignitaries visiting Australia and New Zealand to include speeches from indigenous representatives. Indeed, when the Dalai Lama visited the site where the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion is being built near Bendigo in Victoria, Australia, he received what was referred to as a traditional Aboriginal smoking ceremony before he went onto the stage to address the waiting audience. Once on the stage, a local Aboriginal elder was among those who gave welcome speeches.[1] These two occasions show how indigenous issues in Australia and New Zealand are beginning to affect how Buddhism is practised here. What was noteworthy at the Aotea Centre was that the speaker, on this occasion, was also a practising Buddhist. Before and after his speech, he performed three full prostrations toward the Buddhas on the altar, laying himself out face down on the ground in the typically Tibetan Buddhist gesture of homage.[2]

Buddhism in Australia and New Zealand bears many similarities to other Western countries, and indeed to each other. This article identifies these and also celebrates their differences. The chapter begins with details of the historical development of Buddhism in Australia and New Zealand and subsequent increase in the Buddhist population. This includes examination of how understanding of the growth and present status of Buddhism in these countries has changed as scholarly approaches in the field have developed. The chapter then examines significant events and organizations in these countries, particularly of recent times, alongside lesser known happenings that illustrate Buddhism in action in these countries. Key areas for examination include the effects of engaged Buddhism, the influence of Buddhist material culture, and links with indigenous spirituality.

Historical beginnings

The history of Australia and New Zealand has some similarities due to the historical, cultural and geographic proximities of these two nations. However, historical coverage of the development of Buddhism in both countries is limited. Croucher provides the seminal work on the history of Buddhism in Australia, providing in-depth coverage of the period from 1848 to 1988.[3] In 2000, Spuler's study utilized this research and other minor works to identify six key historical periods:

1. In 1848, Chinese immigrants first brought Buddhism to Australia, and this continued with other ethnic groups in the mid-late 1800s.
2. The beginning of the first organizations in 1925.
3. The first visits by teachers commencing in 1952.
4. 1971 saw the arrival of the first residential teachers and the establishment of monasteries.
5. Rapid Asian immigration and increasing diversification of Buddhist traditions present in Australia was characteristic of this period, caused by factors such as the end of the Vietnam War in 1974-5.
6. This period saw the emergence of ecumenical Buddhist societies beginning with the Buddhist Council of Brisbane in 1982.[4]

In contrast, Kemp's analysis of the history of Buddhism in New Zealand identifies the 1970s as a defining decade.[5] In the period before the 1970s he notes three key features of the history of Buddhism in New Zealand: a Maori legend that suggests the possibility of Tibetan ancestry, the influence of the Chinese gold miners of the nineteenth century, and the role of the Theosophical Society in disseminating Buddhism. Kemp's analysis of the period from the 1970s onwards then delineates the development of significant institutional presence.[6] As in Australia, changes to immigration laws also had significant effect. In 1987 the Immigration Act changed immigration policies to include more Asian immigrants and to accept refugees, resulting in arrivals from Cambodia, Vietnam, Taiwan, China, Thailand and Sri Lanka, and Hong Kong.[7] These immigrants established their own communities in New Zealand, including Buddhist temples and monks

By 2006, Buddhism was the religion of choice of 1-2% of the population in both countries, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographics of Australian and New Zealand Buddhists in 1996, 2001 and 2006

	1996	2001	2006
Australia:			
Percentage of population	1.1 %	1.9 %	2.1%
Numbers of adherents	199,812	357,813	418,749
New Zealand:			
Percentage of population	0.8	1	1.3
Numbers of adherents	28,131	41,469	52,392

It is helpful to understand the broader religious context in which Buddhism has flourished in Australia and New Zealand. Generally speaking, both countries have a Christian majority but lean toward the secular in public discourse. In 2006, the New Zealand census reported that 55.6% of the population was Christian, while 37.7% of respondents categorized themselves as having "no religion". In the Australian census in 2006, 64% of the population identified as Christian, and 19% as having no religion. As a minority religion in both countries, Buddhism faces a range of challenges, but has also achieved many successes.

The ongoing growth of Buddhism in each country is significant, reflecting both the effects of immigration of Buddhists from Asian countries, and conversion to Buddhism. In both Australia and New Zealand the majority of Buddhists are of Asian origin: 75% of the New Zealand Buddhist population[8] and nearly 60% of the Australian population were born in Asian countries that are predominantly Buddhist[9]. Many of these engage with a Buddhist temple not only for religious reasons, but also to maintain language and cultural identity. In New Zealand, the remaining 25% included Buddhists of European descent, a minority within a minority. Kemp calculated that in the 2006 census, the number of Buddhists (52,365) had increased by 27.4% since the previous (2001) census, although the number of Buddhists with a "European ethnicity" declined by 1.25% in the same period.[10] However, census statistics cannot show how influential the "modernist" Buddhism to which this minority subscribes has become in the West, especially among the progressive, tertiary-educated, and often very secular middle classes. Scholars have long wrestled with the use of appropriate terminology to define the different Buddhist groupings, and researchers studying Buddhism in Australian and New Zealand commonly engage with this debate. Kemp uses the terms, "Asian immigrants" and "New Zealand converts", as a starting point for discussion, although acknowledging limitations. Barker and Rocha's recent edited volume on Buddhism and Australia chooses to refer to Anglo and Asian Buddhist Australians, after a discussion on the binary opposition between tradition and modernity, and West and East[11].

The landscape of contemporary antipodean Buddhism

The ways in which Buddhism has developed in Australia and New Zealand reflect localization processes in response to the socio-cultural contexts in which they are located, and also the international flow of Buddhist ideas and teachers throughout the world. Barker and Rocha emphasize the diversity of Buddhism in Australia, noting that Australian Buddhism developed in response to "an intense circulation of ideas, teachers, nun and monks between Asia and the West, in addition to circulation of those within Western countries"[12]. Global flows of Buddhist teachers and ideas throughout the world have meant that a distinctive Australian Buddhism is hard to find. Kemp concludes similarly, that "the movements of people and the accessibility of electronic media will mitigate against any total exclusive cultural expression of a New Zealand Buddhism."[13]

A wide variety of Buddhist lineages are now present in Australia and New Zealand. Most traditions are represented by both major temples and senior teachers, of either local or international origin. Kemp notes that some Buddhist teachers came with an explicitly missionary agenda, resulting in the growth of export Buddhism through active proselytizing.[14] The Fokuangshan is a Taiwanese Buddhist organisation with a very large international presence. They are known for building spectacularly large Chinese-style temples; one of their Tang Dynasty-style temples dominates a low hill in the suburb of Flat Bush in South Auckland, New Zealand; an even larger temple stands on a hillside near Wollongong in New South Wales, Australia. One of the reasons Fokuangshan and other groups build such noteworthy structures is to do "contact work"; that is, to attract interest.[15] Soka Gakkai is also known for its active proselytizing.

A similar analysis to Kemp's could be applied to the Australian situation. Wat Pa Buddharangsee Buddhist Forest Monastery, part of the Mahamakut Foundation, provides an example of export Buddhism. The Mahamakut Foundation, founded in Thailand in 1893, has grown in Thailand to comprise of Mahamakut University and over 3000 temples and monasteries with more than 30,000. There are over 70 centres worldwide, including nine in Australia and two in New Zealand. Through Mahamakut University, the Mahamakut Foundation trains approximately one hundred monks each year as missionaries. The Chief Abbot, Phra Rajsilaporn (Chao Khun Samai) was born in Laos in 1943. He was ordained as novice in Thailand in 1957, was ordained in 1963 and graduated from Mahamakut University in 1972. After taking a one year course of training for missionary work, he was sent to Sydney with a senior monk in 1974.

Kemp argues that Buddhism has also developed in New Zealand as a result of importation, particularly by New Zealanders encountering Buddhism whilst travelling overseas.[16] Most Buddhism in New Zealand, whether for the convert, immigrant or multi-ethnic communities, can be classed as "imported" to a lesser or greater extent.[17]

As Census figures indicate, the Buddhism of immigrants from Buddhist countries has a far greater presence than that of converts, mostly in the main cities but also in some of the smaller regional cities. For example, the Sammapatipada monastery in the regional city of Napier serves the Southeast Asian community (mainly Thai) on the east coast of New Zealand's North Island, and Pu Shien temple in metropolitan Auckland is one of several that serves the city's Chinese-language communities. Most immigrant groups import monks and/or nuns for spiritual leadership (monks in the case of Sammapatipada and Theravadin temples; the Fokuangshan and Pu Shien temples, both in Auckland, are led by nuns). As is the case in other countries with significant immigrant Buddhist populations, such groups tend to be based on cultural and linguistic affiliation, so that in a temple where the services and teachings are in Vietnamese, the congregation is mostly Vietnamese, and so forth.

For refugees and immigrants, the temple provides a vital focal point for nurturing the community, providing a connection with a cultural identity that, in the context of a non-Buddhist host society, is endangered. The Cambodian/Khmer community in New Zealand has been the subject of a recent doctoral thesis by Liev. Liev found that religious practice was one of the "main driving forces for asserting Khmer community identity. Khmer Theravada Buddhism has emerged as a means by which the majority of Cambodians can achieve their spiritual wellbeing, and has become a platform for various community identity developments within the New Zealand social and legal contexts."[18] The first Cambodian refugees brought a monk to New Zealand within two years of settling, because, Liev observes, "they needed to be in touch with the spirits of their relatives and to make merit, without which the wellbeing of Cambodians is vulnerable."[19] Liev concludes that the Khmer temple "is not just an education centre, but also a sociocultural centre that provides a holistic approach to the well-being of Cambodians and their cultural maintenance. As a result, the temple becomes the cradle for the development of Khmer identity"[20], although factions become apparent once people begin investing time and resources in establishing temples.

Vasi reaches similar conclusions in her study of Cambodian immigrants in Australia. Vasi's study of the role of Cambodian Buddhist temples in the provision of Buddhist welfare service in the state of Victoria suggests that temples should be supported to provide a stronger role in supporting communities more formally.[21] These examples also illustrate some of the challenges that Buddhism faces. Barker and Rocha situate their analysis of Buddhism in Australia within the historical context of Australia's relationship with Asia, highlighting the resulting power inequalities between Anglo and Asian Buddhist Australians.[22] McAra, Skennar and Waitt all provide examples of the difficulties Asian Buddhists have had in gaining approval for the building of places of worship.[23]

Studies of immigrant Buddhists support the generalisation that, in terms of how they practice Buddhism, immigrant groups are more likely to be traditionalist in outlook (according to Baumann's 2002 definition) in that they are concerned in part with maintaining ethnic and cultural traditions in their host country, as with the Cambodians discussed above. However immigrant groups may not always be traditionalist and in fact many have modernist and reformist tendencies, while groups dominated by Western converts vary in the extent to which they engage in what Baumann refers to as "modernist" Buddhism.[24] The globalised Tibetan Buddhist movements include what Baumann calls "traditionalist" elements in their practices, such as merit-making and devotion, but these groups attract urbanised modern audiences and exhibit some characteristically modernist approaches.[25] The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), part of the Gelugpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism, is among the more traditionalist of such organisations in the extent to which its teachers emphasise merit-making, but its primary audience is urban middle-class, with European or Chinese ancestry, and typically tertiary-educated, and professional.[26]

In New Zealand, a well-known example of engaged Buddhism is the Amitabha Hospice. It was founded in 1995 by Ecie Hursthouse, a student of Lama Yeshe (the late founder of the FPMT in Auckland, and part of the FPMT, which trains hospice workers to help the terminally ill and their families with such things as at-home respite care. Tzu Chi, the Taiwanese-based Buddhist international aid organisation, also has Australian and New Zealand chapters. Other examples happen beneath the radar. For instance, a monk from Wat Yarnprateep, a Thai temple in the Auckland suburb of Kelston, told McAra in 2010 that he had taught mindfulness meditation at the local secondary school, as part of a program to address the problem of bullying.

One example of import Buddhism by converts is the Dhargyey Buddhist Centre, in the city of Dunedin, established in the mid-1980s by people who had encountered Tibetan Buddhism overseas.[27] They brought the eminent Tibetan lama named Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey from Dharamsala to teach in Dunedin. After his death in 1995, the group cremated his body and constructed a Tibetan-style stupa on a member's land near Dunedin, to commemorate him and house his relics. This Dunedin-based centre now has two affiliated centres elsewhere in New Zealand. Another more common example of import Buddhism is when people establish Buddhist groups that are affiliated to an already-established centre or organisation in another western country. For instance, the Dorje Chang Institute, established in 1976, is part of the FPMT (founded in 1975), which brought a *geshe* (Tibetan scholar-monk) from a monastery in India to teach its members.

Numerous smaller groups, consisting mostly of converts, continue to be established around the country, associated with international organisations that comprise a small group of people who meet on a regular basis, often in rented premises or a private home, often without an experienced teacher, although sometimes a more experienced student offers guidance. Some of these are too small to have their own websites; one example is Auckland's Long White Cloud Sangha, a small group taking inspiration from Thich Nhat Hanh. Its members meet to meditate on cushions on the floor of an Anglican church, and since they do not have a locally-based teacher, share group organisation and leadership among their longer-term members. Thich Thong Phap's role as the volunteer Buddhist chaplain at Flinders University, South Australia, is another interesting example of the range of Buddhist-based groupings that are coming into existence.

Some convert groups do not fit the "import" category so neatly, for instance when a group is founded by a New Zealander who trained overseas. The Auckland Zen Centre was founded by Amala-Sensei, a *pakeha* who trained for over a decade at the Rochester Zen Centre (established in 1966) in the USA. Teacher lineages are also becoming more eclectic, Australian insight meditation teacher, Patrick Kearney, continues to train in the Diamond Sangha Zen tradition, and Yasala Bhante, a Korean nun who has a centre in Northland, New Zealand, is unusual in that she is trained in Theravada Buddhism as well as Korean Zen. In Australia there are also a growing number of Buddhist organizations that do not maintain formal affiliation with parent groups. Bubna-Litic and Higgins provide a study of the secularisation of insight (vipassana) meditation in Sydney,[28] and Santi Forest Monastery is another interesting example. Bhante Sujato established Santi Forest Monastery in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales in 2003. Bhante Sujato was born in 1966 in Perth, Western Australia. During a holiday to Thailand he took novice ordination at Wat Nanachat, then full ordination as a bhikkhu in 1994. After studying with London-born Ajahn Brahm at Bodhinyana Monastery in Perth, he founded Santi Forest Monastery. The monastery "is created in the spirit of the Buddhist Forest Tradition"[29], but has no formal institutional affiliations. Santi is an advocate of full ordination for women in Buddhism, and provides ordination for women as a bhikkhuni.

An interesting feature of Buddhism in both Australia and New Zealand is the growth of multi-ethnic Buddhist congregations. These groups, too, mostly import their teachers; but the teachers do not necessarily come from ethnically Asian origins. For instance, the Auckland-based Theravada Buddhist Association and its associated Vimutti monastery in nearby Bombay hills, serves a diverse range of people, including a number of Pakeha Buddhists, as well as immigrants from Theravadin countries (such as Sri Lanka and Thailand). The main teacher for the Auckland Theravada Buddhist Association, Ajahn Chandako, is an "imported" white American monk who trained in the Thai Forest Sangha tradition in Thailand. Soka Gakkai's New Zealand chapter is also known for its multi-ethnic congregation. Tibetan Buddhism, which commonly appeals to people of European ancestry, also appeals to some people with Chinese ancestry (including Malaysian, Singaporean and Taiwanese): for instance, the Dorje Chang Institute in Auckland has many Chinese members and the Kadampa Buddhist Society in South Auckland (not to be mistaken for the controversial New

Kadampa Tradition) is mainly attended by Chinese.[30]

Although it is difficult in New Zealand, where each Buddhist group has a fairly small membership, some groups attempt to train people to leadership positions within Australia and New Zealand. The Triratna Buddhist Order (formerly the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order) ordains the majority of its Order members in Europe and India, but its New Zealand and Australian membership often pool resources to run regional ordination retreats. Nagasuri details some of these retreats for Australasian women that have been held in New Zealand in recent years in her discussion of women's ordination in Triratna, highlighting the effect of having local opportunities for ordination.[31]

Localising Buddhism

Scholars have identified a number of characteristics of the localizations of Buddhism to Australia and New Zealand.[32] Rocha and Barker's recent publication on Buddhism in Australia combines both academic analyses and community contributions to understanding the contemporary Buddhist situation in Australia. In their introduction, Barker and Rocha identify characteristics of Buddhism in Australia that include democratization, laicization, feminism, and social engagement. These are evident in both how organizations are structured and the Buddhist practices engaged in. The growth of Engaged Buddhism in Australia is a prime example of social engagement. Bucknell identifies the start of Engaged Buddhism in Australia in approximately 1990,[33] and has grown to the stage where conferences and publications focus explicitly on the topic. Sherwood's book on Engaged Buddhism in Australia examines nine areas: education of adults and children, working with the sick and dying in the community and in hospitals and hospices, working in drug rehabilitation, in prisons and with the poor, speaking up for the oppressed, and working for non-human sentient beings.[34]

Engaged Buddhism is a particularly strong example of how Buddhism affects the society in which it is situated more broadly. There are a growing number of Buddhist organizations with a very strongly engaged focus, such as the Loving Kindness Peaceful Youth. This is an Australian Buddhist organization with an international interfaith focus. Loving Kindness Peaceful Youth is based on Essential Education, an initiative of The Foundation for Developing Compassion and Wisdom, which is part of Lama Thubten Yeshe's vision for the FPMT. Other examples of Engaged Buddhism in Australian include Buddhist businesses that support right livelihood. The Triratna Buddhist Order operates a number of team based right livelihood business in Australia, including Windhorse Books, which has been operating since 1995 and is a distributor of books, primarily Buddhist titles, to the book industry in Australia and New Zealand. Alongside Bodhi Books and the Green Elephant, a second-hand shop that raises funds for ex-untouchable women's right livelihood projects in India, these ventures provide support to a number of monastics.

In New Zealand, a well-known example of engaged Buddhism is the Amitabha Hospice. It was founded in 1995 by Ecie Hursthouse, a student of Lama Yeshe (the late founder of the FPMT in Auckland, and part of the FPMT, which trains hospice workers to help the terminally ill and their families with such things as at-home respite care. Tzu Chi, the Taiwanese-based Buddhist international aid organisation, also has Australian and New Zealand chapters. Other examples happen beneath the radar. For instance, a monk from Wat Yarnprateep, a Thai temple in the Auckland suburb of Kelston, told McAra in 2010 that he had taught mindfulness meditation at the local secondary school, as part of a program to address the problem of bullying.

In a few locales, Buddhist material culture is gradually changing the landscape of Australia and New Zealand. These changes range from spectacular examples such as Tang Dynasty-style temples (the Taiwanese organisation Fokuangshan's grand temples in Wollongong, New South Wales, and in south Auckland, New Zealand) to suburban houses adapted to serve as small temples, and inconspicuous rural retreats. The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion will make a particularly spectacular sight: a replica of a fourteenth-century, elaborate, multi-storey Tibetan-style stupa in Gyantse is planned to one day rise above the trees in country near Bendigo in Victoria, Australia. The Jade Buddha for Universal Peace is another interesting example, associated with the Great Stupa project. Made from Canadian jade, the statue stands 2.7 meters high and weighs four tonnes; it is currently touring the world. The website promoting the statue says that the purpose of touring the Jade Buddha is to provide people of all nationalities and religions to "take a moment to reflect upon peace"[35]. At some future date, this statue will be installed either in or near the Great Stupa.

Several organisations support Buddhism in Australia and New Zealand. The Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils represents Buddhism in Australia at a national level, in conjunction with the Australian Sangha Association. The Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils represents more than 200 Buddhist temples and organizations across the country.

The Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils develops and promotes Buddhism in Australia and represents Australian Buddhists to national and international forums. The Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils has been particularly active in working to obtain official recognition of Buddhism as a religion in Australia.[36]

Additionally, the Australian Sangha Association is the main organization representing ordained Buddhist Australians. It provides a range of services including an annual conference to support dialogue and understanding among monastics of different traditions. A particularly interesting development has been their establishment of a Sangha Welfare Fund for supporting monks and nuns in Australia who are in need of short-term assistance. It has long been acknowledge that the traditional sangha faces difficulties in gaining financial support in Western communities, and many monastics in Australia fund their vocations privately. The Sangha Welfare Fund aims to assist members of the Australian Sangha Association on this issue.

The Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils and the Australian Sangha Association represent Buddhism in forums such as the Australian Partnership of Religious Organizations, whose aims include providing advice to government, and promoting and advocating for community harmony, inter-ethnic and inter-faith acceptance. They are also involved in a range of other interfaith activities. Another organization of note is the Australasian Association of Buddhist Studies, which aims to promote the academic study of Buddhism in the Australasian region (Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea and the Pacific Islands).[37] Another active organization is the Australian Association of Buddhist Counsellors and Psychotherapists (AABCAP), which provides a forum for therapists to dialogue on psychotherapy and Buddhism, with the purpose of integrating their experience and knowledge into daily life and their work. The AABCAP has developed a two-year professional training course in Buddhism and Psychotherapy which commenced in 2008. The course is taught by staff including psychiatrists, psychologist and psychotherapists, in tandem with Buddhist monastics and meditation teachers. The AABCAP's 2011 conference is focused on exploring "the recent evidence-based scientific validations initiated by leading Buddhist teachers which confirm the efficacy for health and well-being of core Buddhist teachings and practices".[38]

The New Zealand Buddhist Council, established in 2007, is an umbrella body representing Buddhists in New Zealand. It has sixteen member organizations and sends a newsletter to an extensive email list. Among other things, it aims to "create respectful relationships among Buddhist communities and between Buddhist and other communities in order to develop a harmonious and peaceful New Zealand", and works on issues of common concern, such as seeking policy change in relation to immigration requirements for monastics.[39] In 2010, members of the New Zealand Buddhist Council executive took a special edition of the Dhammapada, with parallel text in English, Pali and Chinese (the latter to represent the first Buddhists in New Zealand), to a number of Buddhist temples and centres around New Zealand. Those who received it acknowledged it in some way, e.g. by placing it on their altar during a chanting service, or performing a blessing. This book was bound in a recycled native timber cover and then presented to Parliament on 12 July 2010, in a ceremony that included representatives of the Muslim, Baha'i and Catholic communities. Members of Parliament who are Buddhist can take their oath of allegiance using this text.[40]

Buddhists are forging new ground in Australia and New Zealand in their engagement with indigenous issues. For example, McAra examines the relationship between an FPMT group in rural Australia and the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land, exploring how the FPMT sought to acknowledge and accommodate the original owners.[41] From another angle, Barzaghi provides some interesting insights into "the discovery of resonances between Zen and Australian indigenous wisdom traditions."[42] She discusses the relationships that the Sydney Zen Centre has forged with indigenous Australian traditions, identifying an important insight as being that sharing of the wisdom of interconnectedness between Zen Buddhism and indigenous spirituality.[43]

Kolig's research provides another example. Kolig's article about the Dhargyey Buddhist Centre in Dunedin discusses how the Buddhist group negotiated issues such as planning law to construct a very visible monument in a prominent place on a hill in open countryside, "visibly . . . [embodying] the presence of Buddhist ideology in a landscape where it appears alien and non-rooted".[44] Kolig finds the stupa project significant for two reasons. First, because although stupas are designed to be seen from afar, local planning consent was granted on the condition that native vegetation be planted around it to mitigate its "alien" appearance.[45] Second, because the Tibetan Buddhist site-consecration ritual included not only a visit and blessing by the Dalai Lama, but also representatives from Ngai Tahu (the local Maori tribe), who offered a formal welcome according to customary etiquette, albeit with the traditional challenge omitted.[46] This incorporation of indigenous ceremony with that of the Buddhism is becoming more common in Australia and New Zealand.[47]

Conclusion

Buddhism in Australia and New Zealand is a vibrant, growing landscape, as diverse as the geographies of the two countries. Buddhism in Australia and New Zealand shares many characteristics of Buddhism in other Western countries. However, as the types of Buddhist teachers and organisations that exist, and their roles both internally and within the wider society, continues to branch out in many directions, taking Buddhism in new and interesting directions. Linkages with indigenous spirituality in both countries is one area of interest, and further research may illuminate more interesting divergences.

Notes

1 McAra 2009, pp.221-22.

2 McAra 2002, fieldnotes.

3 Croucher 1989. See also Rocha and Barker 2010, Abeyagunawardena 2009, Spuler 2002, and Adam and Hughes 2006, Vasi 2005 also provides information on the state of Victoria. Also noteworthy is the 2007 edition of the *Journal of Global Buddhism*, a special issue on Buddhism in Oceania.

4 Spuler 2000.

5 See also Spuler 2002.

6 Kemp 2007.

7 Kemp 2007.

8 Kemp 2007.

9 Rocha and Barker 2010, p.8.

10 Kemp 2008, p.69.

11 Barker and Rocha 2010, p.12.

12 Barker and Rocha 2010, p.3

13 Kemp 2007.

14 Kemp *

15 McAra 2009, p.150.

16 Kemp *

17 The groups discussed here could also be analysed in terms of the extent to which their practices and teachings tend more towards the traditionalist or modernist in their approach; see for example Baumann 2002, see also McMahan 2008 for an analysis of modernist Buddhism.

18 Liev 2008.

19 Liev 2008, p.260. The role of Buddhism in addressing refugee issues such as trauma and bereavement, in addition to homesickness, has been noted elsewhere. Van Esterik (1999), an anthropologist who specializes in Southeast Asian communities at home and in diaspora, attended water-pouring rituals in Lao temples in Toronto and in Vientiane. This ritual of making merit and transferring it to the deceased "is a metaphor of loss and death" which, for North American-based Lao Buddhists, "helps bridge the distance between Laos and North America, past and present, old and new responsibilities" (p.63). The ritual "is particularly poignant for refugees who may have left their parents behind" in contrast to the same ritual in Vientiane, where, she says there was far less emotional intensity.

20 Liev 2008, p.263. However, as Liev notes, factions emerged once people began investing time and resources in establishing temples (2008, pp.287-320).

21 Vasi 2008, p.90 and Vasi 2010.

22 Barker and Rocha 2010, pp.4-7.

23 McAra 2007a, Skennar 2010, Waitt 2010.

24 See also McMahan 2008.

25 Baumann 2002, p.59.

26 See McAra 2009.

27 Kolig 1997.

28 Bubna-Litic and Higgins 2010.

29 Santi Forest Monastery (n.d.)

30 *Manukau Courier* 2008 and Broadhurst 2008.

31 Nagasuri 2010, pp.120-1.

32 Spuler 2002, Spuler 2000, Barker and Rocha 2010, 10-14.

33 Bucknell 2000, p.468.

34 Sherwood 2003.

35 Jade Buddha for Universal Peace (n.d.)

36 Cousens 2010.

37 Huang's research on teaching Buddhism in New Zealand provides a good overview on the teaching of Buddhist Studies in both New Zealand and Australian universities (2009).

38 Australian Association of Buddhist Counsellors and Psychotherapists, n.d.

39 New Zealand Buddhist Council, n.d.

40 New Zealand Buddhist Council 2010.

41 McAra (2007a) also investigates how attempts at "indigenization" can be problematic in a settler-colonial society, because it entails treading appropriating "indigenous" ground – literally the land itself, but also the concepts, such as songlines.

42 Barzaghi 2010, p.130.

43 Barzaghi 2010, pp.130-32.

44 Kolig 1997, p.216.

45 Kolig 1997, pp.216-17.

46 Kolig 1997, pp.214-15.

47 See also McAra 2007a and 2007b.

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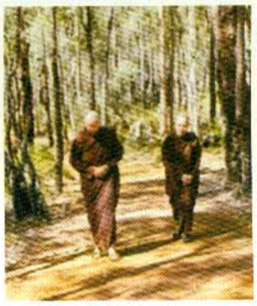
Zen Meditation Retreat

Nan Tien Temple ,Wollongong - NSW Australia

Bodhinyana Monastery

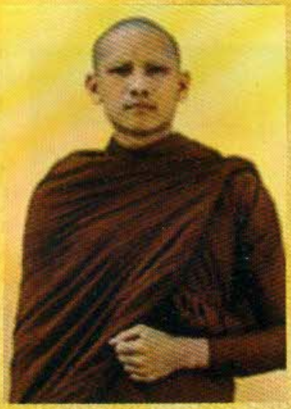
Bodhinyanarama, Wellington - New Zealand



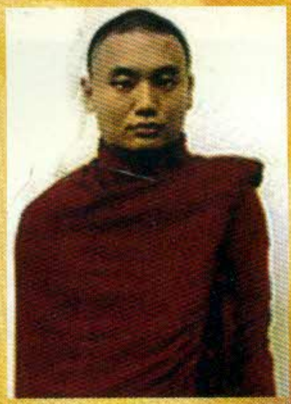
Dhammasara Monastery WA

Buddhist monks and nuns in their distinctivec robes

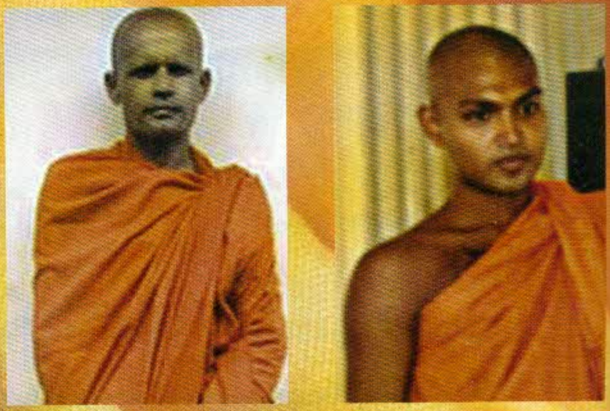
Theravada Tradition



Thai Monk



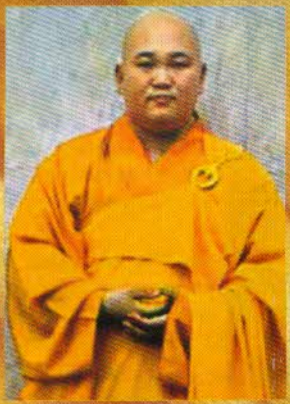
Burmese Monk



Sri Lankan Monks

Tha

Mahayana Tradition



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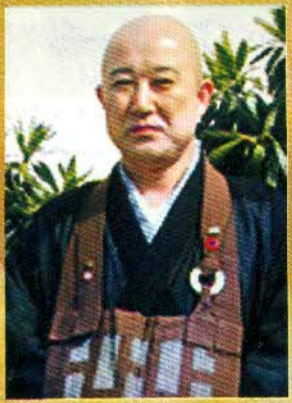
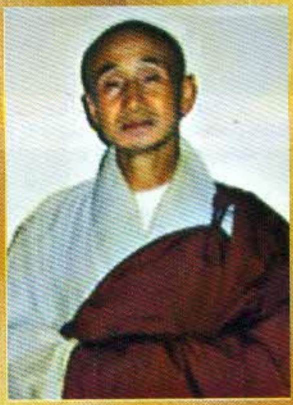
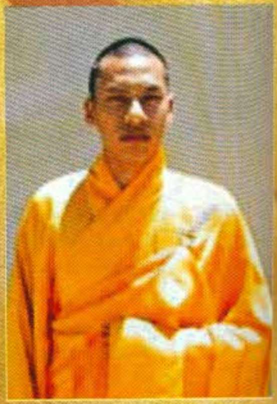


Japanese Monk



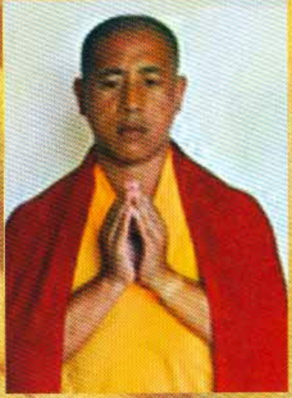
Korean Monk



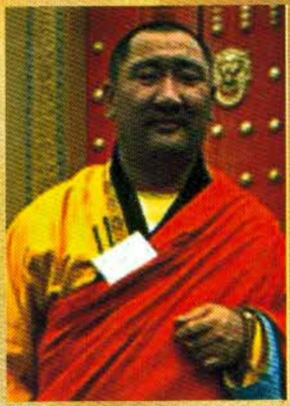
Vietnamese Monk

Jap

Vajrayana Tradition

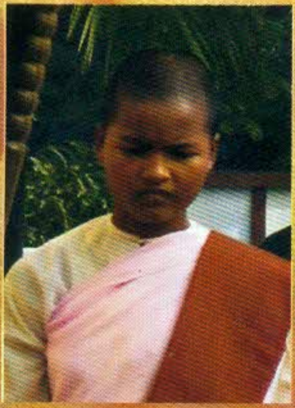


Tibetian Monk

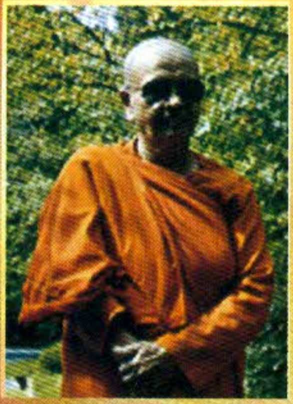


Mongolian Monk

Thai Nun



Burmese Nun



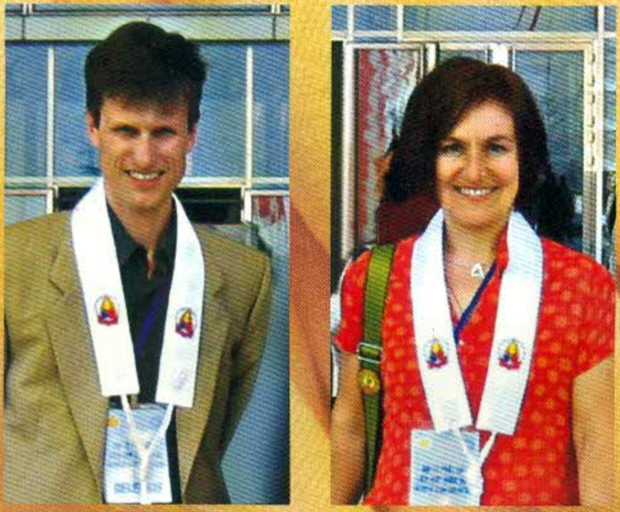
Sri Lankan Nun

Japanese Nun

Korean Nun

Chinese Nun

Tibetian Nun



A new tradition - Triratna Buddhist order

ESSAY 38

Buddhism Beyond 2600 Years

Continuing the Journey

Asanga Tilakaratne

Introduction

In this concluding essay, I will not attempt to summarize the rich and varied content of the foregone chapters. It is redundant, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the enormity of the material covered in these chapters is such that it is beyond the limits of a relatively short concluding essay. Instead, I will briefly highlight some salient features of the journey of Buddhism around the globe for the last twenty-six centuries, and will then discuss some emerging new trends in world Buddhism to conclude with a discussion on challenges to Buddhism and its role for the future.

Journey of Buddhism for Twenty-Six Centuries

Beginning in the "middle land" of ancient India around the sixth century BCE, and spreading to various continents and sub-continents, Buddhism has now evolved to be one of the five leading world religions. In fact, Buddhism started extending beyond the borders of India during the time of Emperor Asoka. According to traditional Theravada history, after the third Buddhist council, Asoka sent missionaries to nine different countries and regions, among which were Sri Lanka and South Asia, known as the "golden land" (savanna-bhumi) by that time. While Theravada started spreading in South and Southeast Asia, other early schools, and subsequently the so-called Hinayana and Mahayana schools, started spreading towards central Asia and China. In China, new forms of Mahayana gradually evolved with the philosophical/conceptual and cultural influences of Taoism and Confucianism. The rest of the East Asia region, including Korea and Japan, received Buddhism through China. When Buddhism in central Asia was destroyed by invaders, the so-called Hinayana schools, which were prevalent in these regions, were destroyed, never to be revived. The fate of these schools in mainland India was no different; only the remnants of some of these schools have survived in China and Japan to date. The Vajrayana tradition, which was started in India after the fifth century CE, moved to Tibet where it developed with influence from the beliefs and practices of its host country.

The Challenge of the Plurality of Religion

To exist for twenty-six centuries is a remarkable achievement for any organization, including religion, even though religions are among the longest-lasting of all mass organizations. Nevertheless, it is common knowledge that survival for many religions has not always been a smooth affair. One religion usually has other religions as adversaries. The hostility towards or intolerance of other religions arises mainly owing to the strong sense of monopoly of being truthful, right and good that is maintained by religions. This peculiar religious logic seems to develop in the following manner: if truth is one (and cannot be more than one, according to the Aristotelian system of bivalent logic), two religions cannot be true, and hence cannot be right or good. What is untrue, not right and not good is harmful, and hence it should not exist. This argument becomes even stronger when claims for truthfulness and goodness are held on the basis of the assumption of an all-knowing and all-good creator god who by definition cannot be ignorant of what is true and incapable of holding what is not good. Of the major world religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are monotheistic, although the Christian concept of monotheism has been questioned by the other two traditions. Hinduism in its many forms is monotheist, polytheist and non-theist, whereas Buddhism is non-theist (although some later Japanese Mahayana schools such as Pureland have come close to the model of monotheistic religion). Those religions which hold a monotheist view have been belligerent with others with a similar worldview in order to claim the monopoly of the true concept of god, and they have been belligerent with those who rejected the monotheistic world view for being different from them.

Even though Buddhism is one among many religions, and, on that count, shares certain characteristics and forms of behaviour with other religious traditions, its position on this issue has to be determined accurately. Since the Buddha did not claim himself to be an all-knowing and all-good god or a messenger of such a god, moral absolutism entailing from theism does not arise in his teaching. The Buddha identified himself with the recluses and Brahmins who made religious claims based on "their own realization through higher knowledge".[1] Being in conformity with this claim, the Buddha also asked his listeners to accept what he said when they saw it for themselves. This is not to say that his listeners always followed this advice. But the texts are not lacking in cases illustrating how some followed this method of free inquiry to the letter.[2] This attitude suggests that the Buddha was not absolutist about his claims. But does this mean that he was relativist about his religious claims? This requires careful examination for while the Buddha was not absolutist in its standard theistic sense, he did not hold a relativist position regarding what he claimed to have realized through his higher knowledge.

It is useful at this point to make a distinction between what religions consider to be morally and ethically good and what these religions uphold as the ultimate goal. The Buddha did not have a problem with the first aspect of the other religious systems of his day, although he had some dissatisfaction about the moral theories of his contemporaries. What he considered to be outright unacceptable were the three positions, namely, the denial of causation, the negation of moral action and its result and determinism, which ultimately amounts to rendering meaningless the concept of human responsibility. Save these three positions, the Buddha was in broad agreement with the ethical and moral teachings of the other religious traditions. The same cannot be said about the final goal taught in Buddhism. The final goal, nibbana, and the path leading to it, are considered to be valid irrespective of the limitations of time and space. The Buddha compared his discovery of nibbana to the discovery of an abandoned city, with its ancient path lost due to non-travelling.[3] The Buddha compared himself to be a pioneer who discovers this lost city by following the abandoned path. This metaphor highlights the Buddhist belief that both the goal and the path have been there all the time: they need to be discovered by a Buddha and shown to the world. Those who follow this path pass through four stages according to which the followers are classified as stream-entrant, once-returner, non-returner and the accomplished. The Buddha categorically states that these four practitioners are found only within his system, and that the other systems are devoid of these true religious personalities.[4] It is clear that the Buddha was uncompromising about these positions, and his statements to this effect are categorical. It does not seem that one can easily bypass this standpoint. In a similar manner, the Buddha described the phenomenon of dependent origination as real (tatha), not false (avitatha) and not otherwise (anannatha), adjectives signifying the stable character of these doctrines. The same adjectives have been used in the discourses to characterize the four noble truths. Now, as is clear from these characterizations of the Dharma, if the Buddha was not a relativist regarding his fundamental insights about human reality, how does Buddhism differ from the other religious traditions which hold similar categorical positions?

The difference lies in my opinion not in the Buddhist concept of truth *per se* but on the attitude the Buddha held toward the plurality of religion and the freedom of the individual to choose. In other words, it is one thing to hold that a certain state of affairs is the case, and quite another to hold that human beings have freedom of choice even in matters of truth and falsehood, meaningfulness and meaninglessness, and usefulness and uselessness. The Buddha perceived his own role in the practice of his followers as one of a guide. In a well-known Dhammapada statement the Buddha says: You yourself must do the work; the Buddhas only give directions (*tumhehi kiccam atappam – akkhataro tathagata*[5]). In addressing the Kalamas (a group of free thinkers), the Buddha said to them not to accept a statement purely on the personal authority of one who says, on the authority of the tradition or on logical grounds unless one sees by oneself the truthfulness of what is said (Anguttara-nikaya III:65). In the "discourse on Inquiry'" (Majjhima-nikaya 47), the Buddha encourages his followers to embark on scrutiny to make sure "whether or not the Buddha is fully enlightened". When Upali, a wealthy banker and Jain follower, was ready to accept what he said, the Buddha warned him against rushing into a decision: "Investigate thoroughly, householder. It is good for such well-known people like you to investigate thoroughly".[6] We also have the example of the youth Uttara who followed the Buddha for six months "like the inseparable shadow", before he finally became convinced (Brahmayu-sutta, Majjhima-nikaya 91). In Upali's case mentioned above, there is a statement made by the Buddha which one would not usually hear in religious circles: when Upali opted to follow the Buddha renouncing his present religious belief, namely, Jainism, the Buddha, having first warned him against making quick decisions, subsequently asked him to continue with his support for the Jain community. As is evident in this remarkable example, the Buddha did not think that Jainism was the right system to follow; nevertheless, he accepted the "right" it has to exist. Furthermore, he accepted that he should not deprive this (or any other religious system) of its means of existence. This clearly shows that the Buddha did not confuse the issue of truth of a religious system with the "right"it has to exist.

If religious traditions could make this distinction very clear, world history would not have witnessed as many religiously-instigated conflicts and wars as it has up to this point. With this understanding since a very early stage of its history, it is a fact that Buddhism has contributed least to the phenomenon of religious wars. Commenting on the track record of religions Joseph Needham says that "Three Judaic religions have a record of intolerance, hatred, malice, uncharitableness and persecution that is black by comparison with Buddhism's record".[7] This does not mean that the entire history of Buddhism has been nothing but peaceful. In an interesting study Noel Seth has collected a good number of instances when Buddhists belonging to many schools have behaved violently. An interesting feature of this phenomenon, however, is that all the reported instances, except the politically motivated battles of the kind reported in the history of East Asian Buddhism,[8] are in-fighting within the Buddhist groups themselves. There is no one single incident involving other religions. This means that Buddhists have not been particularly kind to their own internal heretics.[9] But they do not seem to have minded the presence of other religions, which were clearly identified as representing wrong views. One could say that inside or outside, violence is violence. Nevertheless, we have to admit that there is a clear difference between violence within one's own group and one that was perpetuated to others.[10]

In this manner, the journey of Buddhism has been characterized by its tolerance toward other religions. While the Buddha was not a relativist with regard to the concept of truth in religion, he was not an absolutist in the sense of holding that his own is only true and all else is false. At the same time the Buddha was not hesitant to claim that his teaching alone was capable to lead its followers to nibbana. But this claim did not mean all should follow Buddhism. The Buddha allowed people to choose their own religion. In other words, the Buddha asserted his position without at the same time asserting that everyone should accept it without any question. This can be considered the distinguishing feature in the journey of Buddhism throughout the last twenty-six centuries.

Emerging New Trends in Buddhism

Throughout its long history, the Buddhist tradition as a religious organization has undergone considerable change. These changes have taken place within individual Buddhist traditions, and usually the effects of such changes have been limited to those traditions themselves. With the increased phase of globalization, however, some of these changes are no longer limited to any particular school existing in a particular region; they have global implications. This undoubtedly is a vast subject, and has already been studied by many scholars. In the present discussion I propose to study a few examples of such developments which I would call "new trends" for they seem to represent new movements in Buddhism, going beyond the denominational and geographical boundaries to become global trends. This includes brief discussions on what I would like to call "samagriyana" or united vehicle which is a type of trans-yanic Buddhism, and what is widely known as socially engaged Buddhism. Under the latter I will briefly examine what is called "eco-Buddhism" or Buddhist environmentalism. I will show how these new developments point to an approach transcending the boundaries of the traditional yanas ("vehicles").

Samagriyana (United Vehicle) Buddhism

Today globalization (disappearance of distance and time due to rapid improvements in transport and communication) has enhanced physical proximity and communication among different schools of Buddhist monks in an unprecedented manner. Sharing of physical space and experiencing different modes of life and practice have enhanced mutual understanding among the members of the Sangha. Modern education has done its part by providing opportunities for the monks belonging to many traditions to learn about one another's traditions. In particular, there is an ever-growing tendency among the non-Theravada monks to come to Theravada countries and study what is believed to be the original teaching of the Master. In a similar manner, monks from Theravada tradition go to countries such as China, Korea and Japan and learn different schools of Mahayana Buddhism. The study of Buddhism by Buddhists has never been a dispassionate and pure academic exercise devoid of any religious significance. The end result can be mutual enrichment. It is customary today to hear a Mahayana or a Vajrayana teacher referring to Pali canon and a Theravada teacher narrating a Zen Buddhist story or quoting from Mahayana or Vajrayana texts. Theravada Vipassana meditation is being practiced by a large number of Buddhists cutting across traditional methodologies of meditation.

The very concept of "yana" or vehicle is a later development in the history of Buddhism. The Mahayanists who seem to have coined the term "Mahayana" to describe themselves have used the term "hinayana" to refer to whom they considered to be of lower capacities and inclinations. Clearly "hinayana" is not a term the non-Mahayanists would have used to describe themselves. Neutral terms such as bodhisatvayana and sravakayana were representative of the actual soteriological positions behind the so-called Mahayana and Hinayana respectively. Vajrayana (tantrayana or mantrayana) was the latest development in the process. Theravada, which originated from the original Sangha after the parinirvana of the Buddha seems to have had its existence away from this yana struggle although technically it too could have been called hinayana. Despite the doctrinal differences there has been a considerable amount of interaction among these groups. The worldwide history of Buddhism bears evidence of how members of different Buddhist schools developed friendly and fruitful interactions through the centuries. This is nowhere more evident than in the illustrious Buddhist monk-travellers from ancient China to South Asia, namely, Fa Hsien (334-413), Hsuan Tsang (603-668) and many others who followed their lead. The Buddhist world is indebted to these Chinese monks who risked their lives for the preservation of the vast Buddhist literary heritage. In the subsequent centuries, however, this trend seems to have gradually waned. With the demise of the so-called Hinayana traditions in India, relocation of Vajrayana in the Tibetan area, and overall destruction of Buddhism from its place of birth, interactions among yanas seem to have ceased after the first millennium and a half. Nevertheless, within the yanas there were frequent interactions across boundaries. For instance, the East Asian Mahayana Buddhism in China, Korea and Japan had interactions among themselves unhindered until modernity. The same is true for South Asian and the South East Asian Theravada, and Vajrayana, which have their Eastern and South Asian branches. Particularly within the Theravada there were frequent interactions, and give and take from the time Theravada was reintroduced to South East Asia from Sri Lanka till modernity. But the three main traditions themselves do not seem to have had interactions after the celebrated Chinese pilgrims mentioned above. This state of isolation continued until the nineteenth century when Buddhists, like many others in the world, started moving beyond their traditional habitats.

Close physical proximity of various groups of people, who were otherwise isolated, has become a reality today as a result of globalization. One of the key characteristics of the global existence of Buddhism today is close interaction not only among different schools of Buddhism but also among different religious traditions. This close physical proximity has caused religions to review their traditional isolationist policies and come up with new ways of inter-action. Inter-religious dialogue is a concept that has been developed quite recently in the Western religion in its effort to communicate with other religious traditions. Although Buddhism has not developed any such specific concept, friendliness and cooperation toward other religions has been there from its very inception.

Usually the reaction of one particular religion to other religions has been one of intolerance and hostility. The only purpose of studying another religion was to find fault with it. Different religions have varying degrees of intolerance toward other religions. As we have already observed, Buddhism, throughout its history, has been a quite tolerant religion and it has never engaged in hostilities against other religions although occasionally the Buddhists have been unfriendly to their own dissent groups.[11] It is interesting to note that religions have always treated their internal "heretics" more harshly than they would treat total outsiders. In pre-modern Sri Lanka Theravada tradition, for instance, there was much openness to Hindu philosophical traditions and literature and other Brahmanic systems such as medicine (ayurveda) and astrology (nakshatra) whereas it was almost totally closed for Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions.[12] It is only from the middle of the last century that Mahayana texts were allowed in the traditional monastic education curriculum. The same in varying degrees holds true for the other religions in the world.

Inter-religious dialogue, therefore, is relatively a new phenomenon. What is even more new is intra-religious dialogue which has been growing for the last several decades. This is true not only for Buddhism but also for many other leading religions. Long gone are the days when the monks belonging to the three main sects in Sri Lanka would not even sit together to take part in a dana. Not only among the different sects within the same tradition but also among different Buddhist traditions inter-action and cooperation is quite a common phenomenon today. This trend is developing to such an extent that it is true to say that a form of world Buddhism or a kind of trans-yanic Buddhism is being evolved characterizing a united approach ("united vehicle") to global issues.

Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907): Father of Samagriyana (United Vehicle) Buddhism?

The emergence of this new form of Buddhism did not, however happen all at once. Till the latter part of the nineteenth century the three main traditions of Buddhism existed as disparate schools confined to their traditional habitats although each tradition had close connections with its own brethren across countries. This isolated situation started changing with certain developments that were taking place in the Buddhist countries like Sri Lanka and others around the world. One event with far-reaching affects was the arrival of Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907) in Sri Lanka in 1880 with Madam Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891), who together had founded the Theosophical Society in the United States in 1875. They came to Sri Lanka inspired by reading a report of the famous Panadura debate which took place in 1876 between Buddhists and Christians. Although this was the immediate cause, the two pioneers of theosophy were already looking up to Hinduism and Buddhism as the source of "ancient Asian wisdom tradition". Upon arrival in Sri Lanka, Olcott and Blavatsky embraced Buddhism and started working with the local Buddhist leaders, both monastic[13] and lay, in areas such as the education of children and organization of adults.

In addition to starting new schools for local Buddhist children, a major project of Olcott was to prepare a Buddhist catechism, obviously following the Christian model, to be used in schools and also to serve as a source for the correct knowledge of Buddhism for the adults whom Olcott felt to be wanting in their knowledge of their own religion. In this project he worked closely with Hikkaduve Sri Sumangala Nayaka Thera who was the foremost of all erudite monks of the nineteenth century Sri Lanka (then Ceylon), and to whom he dedicated this work, which was an immediate commercial success. The compilation went into several dozens of reprints and editions and was translated into many languages.

What interests us in this context is not the catechism, which was basically based on the Theravada Buddhism, but what Olcott added at the conclusion under the title "fundamental Buddhist beliefs". [14] Olcott concluded this list with the remark that it was "drafted as a common platform upon which all Buddhists can agree". Guided by the theosophist outlook, Olcott's main purpose was to present Buddhism as a scientific and rational system which did not have a place for superstition. The catechism was the result of this motivation. But, one could question why Olcott wanted to develop what he believed to be the core of Buddhism acceptable to all three traditions of Buddhism? According to Elizabeth J Harris, the answer is the following:

> The theosophists who came to Sri Lanka saw Buddhism as that part of the East's wisdom best suited to aid their search for the spiritual truth at the heart of all religion. Whether they read this in esoteric terms or not, they usually opted to downplay the esoteric when in Sri Lanka in their zeal to encourage a "pure", rational, exoteric Buddhism, rooted in right action, loving compassion, cosmic law. Olcott came closer than other theosophists, with the exception of Frank Lee Woodward of the twentieth century, to making Buddhism his primary love, *even seeking to create a movement that would unify Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism* (emphasis added). (Harris 2006: p.146)

Olcott's effort at identifying a "core Buddhism" may have come as a part of his larger theosophical enterprise, as Harris suggests. At the same time, it seems that Olcott with his exposure to the world was in the process of creating a "world Buddhism" transcending traditional local boundaries. In the fourteen articles Olcott presents as the fundamental Buddhist beliefs, are included the basic Buddhist teachings such as the four noble truths, karma, causation, morality and nirvana. The Buddhist non-theism, and its rational and tolerant character are emphasized at the very beginning. Olcott formulated these articles, obtained the initial approval of the leading members of the Sri Lanka Sangha, and the approval of the representatives of the Mahayana Sangha, having presented these articles to them at the international Buddhist conference held at Adhyar, Madras in 1891. At the end of the 1891 edition of the catechism Olcott describes how he obtained the approval of the Vajrayana tradition for the document:

> The following text of the fourteen items of belief which have been accepted as fundamental principles in both the Southern and Northern sections of Buddhism, by authoritative committees to whom they were submitted by me personally, have so much historical importance that they are added to the present edition of THE BUDDHIST CATECHISM as an Appendix. It has very recently been reported to me by HE Prince Ouchtomsky, the learned Russian Orientalist, that having had the document translated to them, the Chief Lamas of the great Mongolian Buddhist monasteries declared to him that they accept every one of the propositions as drafted, with the one exception that the date of the Buddha is by them believed to have been some thousands of years earlier than the one given by me. This surprising fact had not hitherto come to my knowledge. Can it be that the Mongolian Sangha confuse the real epoch of Sākya Muni with that of his alleged next predecessor? Be this as it may, it is a most encouraging fact that the whole Buddhistic world may now be said to have united to the extent at least of these Fourteen Propositions.

This effort by Olcott remains the first ever in the direction of forging a unified Buddhism, and, as his above words reveal, in addition to formulating the document Olcott actively campaigned for it to be accepted by the Buddhists worldwide. Olcott's document can be considered the first ever attempt at laying the philosophical foundation for a 'unified Buddhism'

Anagarika Dharmapala

Anagarika Dharmapala, Olcott's protégé in Sri Lanka, seems to have inherited this holistic view from his mentor. In 1889, Olcott and Dharmapala went to Japan and this trip, as one writer describes, "was taken up in the spirit of a dawning unity among Theravadins, Mahayanists, and Vajrayanists".[15] In these travels the two leaders encouraged participation of all the Buddhists in the activities they organized. For instance, when Dharmapala established the Mahabodhi Society (1891) with the aim of restoring the Buddhist sacred places in India, he had on his board representatives from Sri Lanka, Tibet, Thailand, China, Chittagong, Myanmar and the USA. For the place of the Buddha's awakening, Buddha-gaya, Dharmapala had a grand vision, including an international university of the calibre of ancient Nalanda. Dharmapala's own words reveal his vision that included all the Buddhist traditions:

> At this hallowed spot, full of imperishable associations, it is proposed to re-establish a monastery for the residence of bhikkhus representing the Buddhist countries of Tibet, Ceylon, China, Japan, Cambodia, Burmah, Chittagong, Nepal, Korea and Arkan. We hope to found also a college at Buddha-gaya for training young men of unblemished character, of whatsoever race or country for the Buddhist order (Sangha), on the lines of the ancient Buddhist university at Nalanda, where were taught the Mahayana and also works belonging to the eighteen sects (quoted by Ananda WP Guruge in Mahinda Deegalle (ed): 2008 p.54).

Although Dharmapala later fell out with Olcott and other theosophists such as Leadbeater and Annie Besant, this holistic vision persisted in him. For both Olcott and Dharmapala there was another avenue through which this broad outlook naturally came. For Olcott it is the globalizing background from which he came. Travelling from the United States to India and Sri Lanka passing through various countries and meeting with various people, Olcott had the experience needed for a holistic approach to Buddhism. Dharmapala himself came from a family with urban culture, and with his early Christian education and entrepreneurship inherited from his family, he was quick to grasp Olcott's outlook. Olcott's arrival in Sri Lanka, having read a report of the Panadura Debate in an American newspaper, can be described as a result of globalization (contraction of space and time due to rapid advances of transport and means of communication). The holistic view toward Buddhism ushered by Olcott and accepted by Dharmapala may well be described as resulting from emerging forces of globalization. Although what was initiated by Olcott and followed by Dharmapala does not seem to have reached its desired conclusion in their lifetimes, the former's formulation of what was widely accepted as the fundamental Buddhist beliefs can be taken as the first-ever effort at formulating a "manifesto for intra-Buddhist dialogue and cooperation.

Developments in the Twentieth Century

Dharmapala's influence on organizational Buddhism was far-reaching. The World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) initiated by the late Professor Gunapala Malalasekera in 1950 was a direct outcome of this broad outlook. Malalasekera came under Dharmapala's influence when he was a young man. Being the first Professor of Buddhist Civilization at University of Ceylon, Malalasekera understandably had a good understanding of the historical evolution of Buddhism. It was his expressed opinion that there were more reasons for Buddhists to get together than to remain separated. The initial resolution for the establishment of WFB was presented to the 1947 meeting of the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress (ACBC), and it said that an organization representing all the Buddhists of the world needs to be established "for the purpose of bringing together Buddhists of the world, of exchanging news and views about the condition of Buddhism, of different countries and of discussing ways and means whereby the Buddhists could make their contribution to peace and happiness". It is with this understanding and conviction that he convened the Buddhists from all the traditions of Buddhism and established what is known today as the World Fellowship of Buddhists. After the establishment of WFB Malalasekera embarked on a world tour covering countries in South, South East and East Asia meeting Buddhists belonging to all traditions. Malalasekera's own account of this tour amply reveals the magnitude of goodwill and respect he commanded everywhere he went.[16] One of the things he achieved on this tour was to get all the Buddhists to accept the six-coloured flag, initiated by Olcott as a part of his holistic vision, as the common Buddhist symbol. In concluding the records of his travel in the Buddhist world Malalasekera says:

> I had asked for unity, for the recognition of the basic agreements which exist, as I passionately believe, amongst all who call themselves the followers of the Sakyamuni Gautama. I sensed that there was this recognition by all, orthodox Theravada or not, and felt happy that my mission was not in vain. In symbolic fellowship I asked, on a mandate of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, that the six-coloured Buddhist Flag as used in Lanka be accepted by Buddhists everywhere. Wherever I went I saw that the response to the call was marvellous. On the day of Vesak, as is known in Theravada lands, or Buddha day (as asked for by the World Fellowship of Buddhists) in others, I saw the Flag continuously from Lanka to Viet Nam, the utmost confines of this my mission (p.71).

Today WFB is an organization serving as the gathering point for Buddhists of all traditions all over the world. Another result of Malalasekera's broad vision of unified Buddhism was the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism project which was conceived and planned by him. The proposed encyclopaedia was not confined to Theravada but was to cover Buddhism in its totality. Malalasekera served as its first editor-in-chief. Many world renowned scholars representing the three traditions are among the contributors to this encyclopaedia.

World Buddhist Sangha Council (WBSC)

WFB has remained predominantly a lay Buddhist organization. It took nearly two decades for a similar organization for the Sangha to develop. The World Buddhist Sangha Council (WBSC), started in 1966 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, with the participation of monks from all Buddhist traditions, is an organization for the Buddhist monks exclusively. The Council membership represents all the Buddhist traditions, sharing responsibilities among members across traditions. The Council has four objectives, namely,

1 developing the organizations and exchanges of Sangha worldwide; (2) helping the Sangha carry out dharmaduta activities throughout the world; (3) enhancing harmony and relationship among different Buddhist traditions and (4) propagating Buddha's teaching of compassion to promote world peace.

These objectives amply testify to a unified vision of the Dhamma, which was to serve as the foundation for the unity of the world-wide Sangha, not identifying with any sectarian particularities. It is also interesting to note that the council accepts the six-coloured flag (referred to above) as its official flag. After four decades from its inauguration, the WBSC is today a world-wide organization in its true sense where Buddhist monks from all traditions get together on one platform and work under one identity, namely, the sons of the Sakyamuni Buddha (*samana sakyaputtiya*). This is definitely a long way from the situation that existed at the turn of the twentieth century when, at times, members of different sects belonging to the same tradition refused even to acknowledge the existence of the other sects.

Daughters of the Buddha: Sakyadhita

A similar and even more interesting development has been taking place among Buddhist women all over the world. Like their male counterparts, the Buddhist nuns along with Buddhist female followers have initiated a worldwide Buddhist women's organization called Sakyadhita (Daughters of the Sakyamuni Buddha): International Network of Buddhist Women. The organization was founded at Buddhagaya in 1987 by a group of female Buddhist practitioners, including Karma Lekshe Tsomo, an American national with an Asian Studies academic background and nun in the Tibetan tradition; Bhiksuni Jampa Tsedroen, a nun in the Tibetan tradition; Ayya Khema (1923-1997), a nun in Theravada tradition; and Dr. Chatsuman Kabilsingh, a university professor in Thailand and later Bhikkhuni Dhammanandi, a Theravada Buddhist nun. The organization comprises nuns and female followers from all traditions including the recently ordained nuns from Sri Lanka.[17]

The very reintroduction of bhikkhuni upasampada (full admission to Buddhist nuns) to Sri Lanka is an example for the emerging trans-yanic Samagriyana Buddhism. The Bhikkhuni-sasana in the Theravada tradition had been extinct for the last ten centuries.[18] The traditional position is that reintroduction within Theravada is out of the question since there is no bhikkhuni-sangha within the Theravada lineage to grant upasampada to them. Consequently, it is claimed that until and unless a Buddha appears again none can initiate the Bhikkhuni order. This meant that there is no room for Bhikkhuni-sasana to be revived within Theravada. The stalwarts in the tradition do not wish to identify the legitimacy of the Mahayana bhikkhunis, and the Vjrayana tradition does not have a full-fledged bhikshuni order. Consequently, they do not see any possibility of cross-breeding. The recent reintroduction of a Bhikkhuni order in Sri Lanka was made possible when the prospective candidates first received higher ordination (upasampada) from the Korean Mahayana Bhikkhuni tradition and subsequently received the same from (a group of) the Sri Lanka Sangha, as the traditional Vinaya requires the bhikkhunis to have upasampada from both the monks and nuns. Strictly speaking, the present bhikkhuni organization in Sri Lanka, which was a joint effort by both Mahayana bhiksunis and Theravada bhikkhus, is both Mahayanic and Theravadin in its origin.[19] Although the traditional monks[20] and lay people of Theravada do not accept the validity of this new upasampada there cannot be any doubt that the age-old boundaries across traditions are being blurred and that what is emerging clearly transcends the age-old categories.

"American Buddhism"

The practitioners of what is sometimes referred to as "American Buddhism" derive inspiration from various Buddhist traditions simultaneously, and seem to have evolved a type of unified Buddhism going beyond traditional categories.[21] So-called American Buddhism is a result of both globalization and some geopolitical and social problems the world has been experiencing for the last four to five decades. The arrival in the USA of East Asian Vietnamese Buddhists in large numbers took place as a result of the Vietnam war that ended by 1975. The kind of Buddhism they brought was mainly Mahayana although a sizable number of these Buddhists were Theravada followers who were "converted" by the Venerable Narada Maha Thera of Wajiraramaya, Colombo. Vajrayana Buddhists from Tibet arrived in the West in large numbers as a result of political problems between China and Tibet. Cambodian Buddhists started arriving in the West in the 1980s after disastrous political experimentations by the Pol Pot regime. What they represented was Theravada Buddhism. In addition to these groups there were Buddhists from the Mahayana countries settled for more than one hundred years in the USA and the Theravada Buddhists from Sri Lanka, Thailand and Myanmar for the last several decades. The evolution of this manifold Buddhism is a long story to be told in great detail and I shall not attempt it here. What is to be noted, however, is the on-going process of the evolution of a new form of Buddhism drawing inspiration from all the traditions. As we noted earlier already some scholars have dubbed this as "American Buddhism". Richard Hughes Seager tries to portray this phenomenon accordingly:

> The American Buddhist community as a whole encompasses an extremely wide spectrum of opinions about the nature of Buddhism. Within it, traditionalist and innovative impulses co-exist, sometimes comfortably, sometimes not. Tolerance is generally valued highly and the idea that all expressions of the dharma are in essence one is widely accepted.[22]

A good example of this newly evolving Buddhism comes from the Sangha (monks and nuns) in this part of the world. The Buddhist Sangha Council of Southern California founded in 1980, initially to mediate disputes between monks and laity, grew up to be an organization bringing monks and laity from all Buddhist traditions that exist in that region. Inter-Buddhist celebration of Vesak organized by the Council is very significant for it marks the unanimity reached by all Buddhist traditions to adopt the full-moon day of the month of May, as accepted by the Theravada tradition, as the birth day of the Buddha. This shows how different Buddhist traditions developied consensus in matters of importance and created new traditions in their new habitats.

In addition to this example of organizational significance, there is another important aspect with doctrinal significance that has developed within the context of North America in particular and the West in general. It is the practice of meditation we referred to at the beginning of this discussion. The insight (vipassana) meditation was introduced to the USA in the 1960s by the monks of the Theravada school. This early meditation remained basically traditional and the teachers were usually monks from south and Southeast Asian countries. This traditional form started undergoing change with lay meditation teachers such as Sharon Salsberg (born 1952), Joseph Goldstein (born 1944) and Jack Cornfield (born 1945). Salsberg and Goldstein studied meditation under the well-known Myanmar-Indian meditation teacher Goenka (born 1924) whereas Cornfield was ordained twice under Ajaan Chah (1917-1992) in Thailand. They together started the Insight Meditation Society in 1974 in Barr, Massachusetts, and have been teaching meditation at their centre and elsewhere. What is unique in their practice of meditation is that it has not been confined to the traditional Theravada. They have evolved a practice deriving inspiration from all the three Buddhist traditions and even from some non-Buddhist systems. This is very different from how the traditional meditation teachers from Theravada would feature their practice. Although they may have their own unique approaches to meditation and follow some of their own methods, they basically remain within the tradition. The newly evolved practice is not strictly Theravada in that sense. It is eclectic and trans-yanic in its character. Apart from this American reconstruction of meditation, some of the world-renowned teachers such as Thich Nhat Hanh are well-known for their innovative methods that cut across traditions.

As we know, the traditional division of Mahayana and Hinayana is based on a value judgment in which the former takes the latter to be of low dispositions whereas the latter is convinced that the former is misguided. After two millennia of the controversy, today, however, the traditional division does not mean exactly the same. All traditions seem to come to a consensus as to what the core of Buddhism is. Traditions have displayed openness to learn from others. Buddhists are free to follow whatever the goal they aspire to, namely, the goal of full enlightenment, that of individual enlightenment or the goal of enlightenment as an arahant. As we have seen in the discussion so far, the dialogue within Buddhists themselves has been less theoretically oriented and more practical. This, however, does not preclude the need to have a theoretically refined position regarding the dialogue within. What seems significant is that the substantial practical experience gained so far can shape the nature of the theory and avoid the danger of theory being empty.

Socially Engaged Buddhism

Buddhism arrived in the Western world roughly one and half centuries ago and was perceived as matching well with rational understanding of the universe advocated by the Enlightenment movement in Europe. More recently its philosophy was interpreted by philosophers like KN Jayatilleke as embodying an advanced form of empiricism. Continuing this line of thinking, today Buddhism is identified as a religious and intellectual force that provides an alternative mode of thinking and behaviour for those millions of people who feel that they need a change.

What is known as "socially engaged Buddhism" refers to a way of thinking and behaviour characterized by active engagement by Buddhists in social and political problems that affect society at large. Writing in 1985 on socially engaged Buddhism, Fred Eppsteiner, having described a risky effort by a group of concerned Buddhists to evacuate about 200 civilians trapped in a combat zone in Vietnam (in the mid-1960s), says:

> The term "engaged Buddhism" refers to this kind of active involvement by Buddhists in society and its problems. Participants in this nascent movement seek to actualize Buddhism's traditional ideals of wisdom and compassion in today's world. In times of war or intense hostility they will place themselves between factions, literally or figuratively (Eppsteiner 1985. p.xi).

Social engagement is not something new in Buddhism. In traditional Buddhist societies Buddhists have always been living a community life looking after the needs of one another. The newness in socially engaged Buddhism is that it is the response of the West, where Buddhism was introduced recently, to the initial misrepresentation of Buddhism as an anti-social teaching. The difference is that whereas in traditional societies Buddhists looked after their own societal needs, modern Buddhists are involved in large social political issues, the effects of which go far beyond the places where they originated. This is basically a result of globalization forces. Furthermore, social activism of Buddhists can be regarded as both responding to the pressing needs of the world today and searching for new meanings of religious life itself.

Eco-Buddhism (Green Buddhism)

Although any specific movement or an organization is not meant by these terms, eco-Buddhism or green Buddhism is the Buddhist theory and practice toward nature. There are many organizations and groups world over which may be described under these terms. As theory, Eco-Buddhism presupposes and is based on the Buddhist perception of reality as a dependently arisen phenomenon. As practice, eco-Buddhism represents a set of attitudes and a way of behaviour. It is activism or praxis what makes eco-Buddhism a kind of engaged Buddhism.[23] As one advocate of this way of thinking puts it, "contrary to the popular view of Buddhism as a 'refuge' from the world, to become a Buddhist today is definitely political act. More specifically it is a geopolitical act".[24]

Buddhist ecologists identify two approaches to ecology: one is what is described as "appropriate management" or stewardship of nature and its resources by man. This is understood to be a human-centred environmentalism based on individualism and supporting exploitation of natural resources by human beings. In this perspective, the opponents claim, individual greed is justified and the result is "a planet of ten billion points of infinite greed". The other approach is characterized by the protection of nature and environment from encroachment by human beings. This has been described as "eco-centric environmentalism", and many find it preferable to the former. Writers such as Ken Jones (1993) criticize even this second type of approach which is relatively good. He describes views held under this category as "many varieties of deeper greenery" which are still based on subtle forms of individualism. He compares such approaches to the parable of the elephant and blind men and proposes to jettison modern hyper-individualism in favour of a return to community.

What this sketch reveals is that there is an intensive discussion and debate on the issues of engaged Buddhism including many aspects of Buddhist environmentalism. The problem of individualism which Ken Jones touches is at the heart of the whole issue. The place of the human being in the whole process of interacting with nature has to be assessed correctly with the right balance. The concerns regarding space prevent me from doing so in this context.

Doctrinal and organizational implications

As we saw in the above discussion, unified Buddhism cuts across the traditional three yanas. The practice throughout history has been that the contacts among the traditions have been kept to the minimum although we cannot say that there were no contacts at all or that they were actively hostile to one another. As Noel Seth's paper referred to above reveals, there have been hostilities within schools of, for instance, Japan and Korea and other countries. Sri Lanka history, however, records several instances of conflict between the Mahavihara and those who held different views (vaitulya-vada). But one finds hardly any evidence of the three Buddhist traditions fighting with one another. What we witness with the dawn of modernity is something different. It is a conscious effort to assimilate and incorporate ideas and practices of one another which were naturally isolated in the past owing to practical difficulties of interaction.

A question one may raise is whether there is any doctrinal or theoretical difficulty for this kind of interaction among divergent groups. Both in the early Dhamma and the Vinaya one finds frequent references to the unity of the Sangha (sangha-samaggi). The discourses such as Cula-gosinga and Maha-gosinga of the Majjhima-nikaya (31 & 32) heap praise on the disciples of the Buddha who interacted with each other like "milk and water" (khirodakibhuta). Devadatta, on the contrary, is disparaged for splitting the sangha (sangha-bheda), which is described as one of the most serious unwholesome deeds resulting in the birth in the hell immediately after death (anantariya-kamma). But it is not included in the category of "defeat" (parajika), the most serious of all monastic offences. It is included in the next category, sanghadisesa, which can be remedied by proper behaviour unlike the first category which cannot be remedied. There are two sanghadisesa rules (rules 10 & 11) applicable to one who commits the split of the Sangha and to those who support such an act. In both cases those who were found guilty may remedy their offences by proper behaviour.

In the subsequent history of the Sasana we find that there were many instances when the groups of sangha split from the mother group and started acting as separate groups. Symbolic to the independent activism is performance of the Patimokkha recital (bi-weekly recital of the code of Vinaya rules) as a separate group. It is not quite clear whether or not such breakaway groups were considered to have committed the offence of sangha-bheda. As early Buddhist history shows, there were breakaway groups from the breakaway groups themselves, making the situation more complicated. Even in the more recent history of Buddhism in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka this tendency of breaking away from mother groups was quite commonplace. In Sri Lanka, in the Amarapura fraternity, which started in the early eighteenth century, there are still more than twenty subgroups operating as independent groups. But these groups are not considered as guilty of splitting the Sangha although every act of forming a new group of the Sangha runs the risk of sanghabheda.

While the Vinaya does not approve of sanghabheda it does provide for the Sangha, which is split, to come together. The recital of the Patimokkha as one group is considered as symbolic of the unity of the Sangha. There is a special provision for the recital when the Sangha, which was split before, reunites as one group. This recital is called "unity recital" (samaggi-uposatha). A recent example of such performance is when all the branches of the Amarapura fraternity of Sri Lanka got together in 1969 and performed uposatha together to mark the newly forged unity.[25] This shows that the ideal situation is to have a single unitary body of the Sangha. If a group breaks away that does not necessarily mean that the breakaway group is invariably guilty for there is a possibility that the very breakaway group is the one that upholds the right position. Both the Dhamma and the Vinaya supports unity, and encourage divergent groups to unite. Strictly speaking, when divergent groups come together there is no divergence anymore and the uposatha is performed within the united Sangha.

The situation with the three Buddhist traditions today is different. When the three traditions come together they come as unique groups maintaining their identity, but tend to work together upholding commonalities at a higher level. For example, in the case of sakya-dhita or "the daughters of the Buddha", what unites all different Buddhists groups is their identity as the female followers of the Buddha. When the first group of nuns from Sri Lanka received higher admission (upasampada) from a group of Korean nuns and when the same group was given higher admission by the Sri Lanka Theravada Sangha, as the Theravada Vinaya requires, this becomes tantamount to accepting the validity of the Mahayana practice by the Theravada. The situation here is different from two divergent groups coming together to form one group. This is a clear case of two different Buddhist traditions accepting the validity of each other while maintaining their own identities. The resultant bhikkhuni tradition functioning currently in Sri Lanka[26] is neither fully Theravada nor fully Mahayana; it is both Theravada and Mahayana. (Currently the Sri Lanka Theravada hierarchy and the Sri Lanka state do not accept the validity of this newly-formed Bhikkhuni Sangha. However, if they proceed as a new, non-Theravada group with a new identity, this question does not arise.) The Vinaya observed by the Mayahana nuns is not the same as that followed by the Theravada nuns. On the other hand, however, the differences are only with regard to minor rules, and not the major ones. From the point of view of the Dhamma we can argue that the Mahayana, while upholding the Buddhahood as the ultimate goal and the path of the Bodhisatva as the method, does not reject the arahant ideal or the sravaka-yana. This shows that there is really not any serious difficulty either from the Vinaya or from the Dhamma in the joint operations among the three traditions. The presence of some East Asian sects with married clergy, however, seems to pose a problem, for sex involves violating one of the central requirements of the monastic life not only in the traditional Theravada, but also in Mahayana and Vajrayana. This more recent development, which arose first in Japan and then introduced to Korea almost by force at the turn of the last century, may be ignored for the present discussion. In any case, in the Buddhist tradition in which where there is no centre with power accumulated, a question of excommunication does not arise. Therefore it seems that there is no real doctrinal or "legal" difficulty for a unified, trans-yanic Buddhism to evolve.

Engaged Buddhism represents the contemporary Buddhist approaches to social issues and problems. Although social consciousness is not absent in Buddhism, what we witness today is Buddhists sharing the global awareness of the need for addressing social ills. The phenomenon of global warming which has been described as "the climate emergency" has been an area in which some of leading scientists and religious figures have been active for the last several decades. Today there is a growing consensus among the Buddhist leaders and scholars belonging to all three schools that they should adopt a unified approach to address this serious issue. There are signs that this approach is being developed across the three Buddhist traditions. In a recently published anthology of essays of a group of leading Buddhist religious and academic figures such as the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh and Bhikkhu Bodhi, this sentiment is voiced in the following words: "What an inspiring example Buddhism could provide, if the various Buddhist traditions were able to work out a joint response to this climate emergency" (John Stanley *et al* 2009. p.12). The problems of global dimension require globally applicable solutions for which the Buddhist approach has to be one and not many. Charles Prebish, writing on" "in which Buddhists from each of the 'vehicles' and cultures will communicate openly and meaningfully".

Challenges and Prospects

There are challenges to Buddhism, both internal and external: how Buddhism faces these challenges will largely determine its future as a viable philosophy of life for generations to come. In this part of the discussion I will deal with the following four issues which clearly do not exhaust the challenges Buddhism is facing.

(1) Multiplicity of religion: the attitude of Buddhism towards the other religions and conversion, and the Buddhist concept and practice of inter-religious harmony.
(2) Responding to social suffering, and fine-tuning the Buddhist social ethics and philosophy.
(3) Developing the Buddhist standpoints on contemporary ethical/bio-ethical issue.
(4) Buddhist contribution to bring about peace to the divided and war-torn world.

Multiplicity of religion, conversion and inter-religious harmony

We have already referred to some problems associated with the phenomenon of multiplicity of religion. In particular we discussed the Buddhist concept of religious truth and concluded that holding a concept of truth is not problematic and that what is problematic is the lack of tolerance towards the multiplicity of what different traditions hold as truth. The view currently popular among those who discuss the multiplicity of religious truth is a kind of relativism which is to hold that different religious worldviews are equally true and that they are ultimately no different from each other for they all refer to one and the same transcendent which has been described in many religions in many terms. A classic example of this standpoint is found in John Hick (1989) where he studies the ultimate goals of all the major religions, analyses them into two categories as "personae" and "impersonae" – personal (Yahweh, Allah, Krishna, etc.) and impersonal (Tathata, Nirvana, Satori, Advaya, etc.) characterizations of the Transcendent – and claims that in either manner they represent one and the same transcendental. The trouble with this analysis is that it fails to recognize the very multiplicity of religious belief which it aims to explain! The assumption behind this claim, namely that all religions ultimately refer to an ineffable transcendental, is problematic at best, and I have demonstrated elsewhere that the Buddhist religious experience cannot be characterized as transcendental and ineffable.[27] In the context of the discussion on the multiplicity of religious beliefs this move towards transcendentalism seems to be based on a misunderstanding that harmony among religions is impossible in the absence of some transcendental point where all these religions meet and converge. The so-called inter-religious or inter-faith dialogue conducted by some of its advocates is founded on this misconception. The Buddhist understanding, as I have already shown, is different: it is natural for different religions to hold different religious truths; what is needed is to accept and honour the freedom of people to hold different views and faiths. The conclusion is that we must search for a solution that surpasses the narrow boundaries of both relativism and absolutism in religion.

This Buddhist position should not be misunderstood as refusal to accept the need for inter-religious understanding, good-will and cooperation. The truth is far from it. The Buddhist concern is not on the lofty goal but on the methodology adopted by its adherents. The only method the Buddha followed in order to convince others of his Teaching is the act of teaching alone. He believed that anyone had this "right" to teach, but it is up to the listeners to weigh the evidence carefully and to accept or to reject. This is what the Buddha demonstrated to free-thinking Kalamas in his well-documented encounter with them. To doubt is not a sin in Buddhism. When two people say two mutually contradictory views one must necessarily doubt, as the Buddha said to Kalamas. It is up to the teachers to teach, and it is up to the listeners to accept or reject what is taught. What is crucial is to honour the individual's freedom to choose. It is possible that some adherents of religions would claim that they know what is good for others who follow the wrong religions. Even if this could be the case, such knowledge does not guarantee them a right to impose their religious beliefs on so-called unbelievers or wrong believers.

Today we live in a world in which religions are in fierce competition to convert, increase numbers and become the number one among their counterparts. Buddhism cannot become a partner of this competition. On the one hand, the attitude behind the act of conversion, namely that people are passive objects to be converted, is alien to the Buddhist attitude to human beings as capable of bearing responsibility for their own actions. On the other hand, the religious rivalry which has caused enormous suffering to the human kind for millennia cannot be one in conformity with the noble eightfold path which is to reduce and ultimately to do away with suffering but not to increase it.

The competition of religions to increase their numbers has created many unpleasant situations in inter-religious interactions. It is well-known that religious organizations with substantial financial and material resources mainly from developed countries come to the so-called under-developed countries and are very active in converting people. The term "unethical conversion" has been coined to describe this questionable mode of practice. Some countries have even taken legal measures against such practices. An essential function of any religious teacher or a religion is to teach. Therefore it is not right to deny that basic function. But what is very important is to engage in this exercise recognizing and respecting the sentiments, traditions and cultures of the people who are targeted, and by not trying to lure them by material gains or promises. In an essay to be discussed in the next section Bhikkhu Bodhi refers to two Christian social service organizations, Christian Aid and Christian World Vision and says that they "are not missionary movements aimed at proselytizing but relief organizations that provide relief and development aid". His statement, sadly, is not supported by the experience of the developing world with these two and many other similar organizations who have been found to be active in proselytizing along with their social service work. For many organizations of this nature, social service is only an excuse for conversion. What is needed for religions today is to get away from the ambitious mentality of converting the whole world and to agree on certain basic principles of conversion. Some religious groups seem to think that they should convert by any means at any cost. The promised end is taken as providing justification for the questionable means. Conversion in the Buddhist view should happen on and only on rational conviction. The history of Buddhism does not show any instance in which Buddhists have resorted to means which are not in accordance with the fundamental principles taught by the Buddha. Buddhism deserves to receive this same courtesy back from the other religions.

Responding to social suffering

Buddhism in general, the Theravada Buddhism in particular, has been blamed for being more concerned about one's personal liberation from samsaric suffering and for being less concerned about the social suffering rampant in today's world. The discussion on the nature and the limits of altruism is not something coming totally from outside the Buddhist tradition; it has been there within the tradition for a long time. The classical debate between Mahayana and the so-called Hinayana was centred on this issue. The Mahayanist Bodhisatva ideal was brought in as a substitute for the ideal of the arahant, whose life was characterized by personal purity and aloofness from society. The Bodhisatva ideal, on the contrary, was defined as one who will be in the samsara till the last being attains enlightenment. Since the concept of "the last being in the samsara" does not make sense in the endless samsara, what this amounts to is that the Mahayana Bodhisatva is one who will never be away from the samsara. With this Bodhisatva ideal, it is clear that the Mahayanists were trying to highlight the importance of taking other's suffering over and above one's own suffering. On the other hand, in defence of the

Theravada arahant ideal, it can be pointed out that it does not reject the idea of altruism, but it only reiterates the need for being blameless before one helps others.

This theoretical debate may be conducted endlessly with reasons produced for and against. But it remains a fact, relative to some other religious traditions, that in Buddhism, social philosophy is less articulated in global terms and social activism is less developed to meet the global needs. In a short but very powerful essay, titled "A challenge to Buddhists" Bhikkhu Bodhi, a leading Theravada Buddhist monk of Western origin has presented this matter in no uncertain term. He says:

> I've been struck by how seldom the theme of global suffering – the palpable suffering of real human beings – is thematically explored in the Buddhist journals and teachings with which I am acquainted. It seems to me that we Western Buddhists tend to dwell in a cognitive space that defines the first noble truth largely against the background of our middle-class lifestyles: as the gnawing of discontent; the ennui of over-satiation; the pain of unfulfilling relationships; or with a bow to Buddhist theory, as bondage to the round of rebirths. Too often, I feel, our focus on these aspects of dukkha has made us oblivion to the vast, catastrophic suffering that daily overwhelms three-fourths of the world's population.

In this essay Bhikkhu Bodhi warns Buddhists that if they do not develop a methodology to care for human suffering, Buddhism will be reduced to a mere means to pursue personal spiritual growth, a project which will be attractive largely to the affluent and the educated. Bhikkhu Bodhi discusses this problem mainly in the context of Western Buddhism in which the practice of Buddhism is understood basically in terms of sitting meditation. This particular concept of the "practice" of Buddhism is a product of the West. In the East, particularly in the South and Southeast of Asia where Theravada Buddhism has its roots, one hardly finds "practicing" Buddhists in this sense. The large majority of Buddhists in these regions are those who have received their religion by their birth, and do not have a specific time when they "practice' Buddhism and other times when they do not. For most traditional Buddhists, Buddhism is a socio-religious affair in which they are engaged in giving in numerous ways, virtue in the sense of observing the five precepts at varying capacities, and engaging in meditation and many other related activities. They respond to the callings of their fellow-beings in need, look after the monks and the village monastery to their best capacity, and contribute to social causes according to their strength. It is true that these people are not very aware of the problems of global dimension. Even if they are aware of the problems, they are not in a position to do anything substantial owing to their less than desirable economic conditions. Under these circumstances one would expect the Buddhists of the affluent West to respond to the manifold human suffering more readily. Bhikkhu Bodhi acknowledges the activism of "Socially Engaged Buddhism", a concept articulated in the context of Western Buddhism, though the leading proponents of the movement, Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Than, AT Ariyaratne, etc., are from the traditional Buddhist countries. But Bhikkhu Bodhi still thinks that the practice of such Buddhist virtues as loving kindness and compassion should not be practiced merely as a means of personal transformation but should be translated into action.

The point of the Bhikkhu Bodhi's eye-opening essay is that Buddhists still have room for improvement in the direction of alleviating tangible human suffering. Whether it is Eastern or Western Buddhists, all have an obligation to be sensitive to human suffering and do their utmost to reduce and ultimately eradicate it. But his message should not be misunderstood as a plea to leave the meditation hall to reach out to the world. One gets the necessary strength and integrity to reach out to the world through the inner exercise of meditation. One has to be sufficiently stable within oneself even to help others materially. What I mean by "being stable" is not the final deliverance by becoming an arahant. But if Buddhism is to go beyond mere social service and Buddhists to be a little more than the mere "good guys" one should see the full significance of its rich tradition of inner development.

Developing a Buddhist standpoint on contemporary ethical/bio-ethical issues

Although ethical dilemmas are not new to humanity, with the rapid developments in science and technology, and with the physical and virtual proximity created by globalization and communication, people have started feeling the heat of ethical arguments as never before. Although science and technology create ethical problems they themselves do not and cannot answer what they have created. Answers have been sought outside, and religions have served as sources for inspiration, responses, and explanations. Usually religious response has been confined to the religions of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and, consequently what usually comes as religious responses to contemporary ethical issues is originated from these religions which are basically theistic. While there is basically nothing undesirable about it, Buddhism being the only non-theistic system among the major world religions and being non-Western in culture, it is likely that Buddhism provides responses/answers different in nature. Therefore there is a need to include Buddhism in the map.

There are, however, some other problems which are internal to Buddhism to be dealt with in this regard. Why Buddhism is not on the map is mainly due to the fact that there is no Buddhist standpoint on modern ethical issues developed by Buddhists. As Damien Keown observes:

> [However] there is a curious absence of authoritative opinion on these matters. Contemporary Buddhist groups rarely publish position papers and the great thinkers of the past left no legacy in the form of treatises on ethics. There is not even a word for "ethics" in the early Buddhist texts – the closest approximation to it is *sila*, often translated as "morality" but closer in meaning to disciplined behaviour or self-restraint. In the course of Buddhist history there never arose a branch of learning concerned with the philosophical analysis of moral norms (Keown 2005 p.27).

Damien Keown is right in saying that in the history of Buddhism there never arose a branch of learning called ethics dealing with the philosophical analysis of moral norms. He further thinks that this absence is due to the fact that Buddhism has always existed under rulers with absolute powers and that Buddhism basically started as a movement of renouncers that rejected social life. Although both these claims are true, this analysis does not explain fully why there is no philosophical analysis of moral norms in the manner of what is found in the western philosophical tradition. That there is in the Buddhist canonical literature a vast amount of material dealing with morality (virtue and ethics) is undeniable. Discussions relevant to morality are found in many discourses, in the Vinaya dealing with the monastic discipline and in the Abhidhamma, as well as the commentarial literature including the Visuddhimagga of Buddhaghosa, the greatest commentator of the Pali canon. A study of these materials show that discussions relevant to what we today call normative and meta ethics are intermingled in these discussions. A discourse like Kalama-sutta (of the Anguttara-nikaya) in which the Buddha details ten grounds for not accepting any moral claim, the empirical criteria to accept moral claims and classification of moral norms, is a good example for the rich moral content of the early Buddhist thought. The detailed and minute analyses of matters pertaining to the monastic behaviour found in the Vinaya Pitaka and the Buddha's guidelines for social, political and economic spheres of life are too well known to describe here. This means that Buddhism possesses an ethics and morality adequate for the goal it endeavours to achieve. This, however, is not to say that Buddhism has developed an analytical and philosophical inquiry of ethics in its modern sense. In addition to reasons proposed by Keown for this absence the strong pragmatic and practical orientation of the teaching of the Buddha should be the key reason why Buddhism has not developed a detailed ethical inquiry similar to one found in the Western philosophical tradition.

Having provided this justification for the historical absence of "ethics" in Buddhism, one cannot still deny the need to develop a Buddhist position regarding the contemporary ethical issues. Currently there is no such a position developed by Buddhist philosophers which is readily available for reference. The difficulty of developing a position acceptable to all the three Buddhist traditions has been highlighted. Given the broad agreement among the Buddhist traditions at the fundamental conceptual and philosophical level, and also at the organizational level, which has been a growing phenomenon for the last several decades, it does not seem that there is an insurmountable obstacle here. In fact this multiplicity of congruent positions may be viewed not as an obstacle but as an advantage. There may be several Buddhist positions with differences in degree but not in kind. The fact that there is no central authority to sanction "the correct" position too has been discussed. This again can be considered a healthy feature in Buddhism for it leaves open the possibility for dynamism while it discourages ideological authoritarianism and resultant rigidity. One of the challenges for Buddhism today is to study the contemporary ethical problems such as cloning from perspectives that are unique to Buddhism and come up with analyses/explanations/solutions. The new ethical problems will not only require Buddhists to provide answers but also such problems will force Buddhists to re-evaluate their own traditional teachings to test their power to meet the new challenges.

Promoting peace in a divided and war-torn world

One of the biggest challenges that lie before Buddhism is the role it should play to bring peace, harmony, understanding and respect to a world torn between ideologies and conflicts. Religions in general have this task before them. But one cannot say that religions have been always successful in this task. In fact religions have been accused as perpetrators of conflict and violence. We do not need to go into world history which has been plagued with religious wars among many other types of wars. As we saw earlier in this discussion, Buddhism has been peaceful in its journey through 2,600 years. It has not engaged in war to propagate itself or to subjugate other religions in its journey through various cultures and civilizations. Rulers who embraced Buddhism have not subjugated other countries for the greater glory of the Buddha or Buddhism. The classic example of the Emperor Asoka in India (third century BCE) shows how he stopped his expansionist wars ever since he accepted Buddhism. Although it is incumbent upon Buddhism to continue with this good record the task of Buddhism today is to go beyond maintaining the status quo and contribute actively for the promotion of peace and harmony among religious and social groups and, above all, among all sentient beings.

Buddhism has the resources to achieve this goal. In addition to the life of the Buddha embodying the inner peace and characterized by the dedication to peace, harmony and understanding among social groups, Buddhists have the teachings of the Buddha to provide the philosophical basis for such an endeavour. The doctrine of dependent origination (paticca-samuppada) provides the overall approach of Buddhism to any problem including social conflicts. The dependent origination highlights the multiplicity of causes and conditions and their inter-connectedness in creating a situation. The "right view" marking the beginning of the noble eightfold path stresses the correct perspective in approaching a particular situation. Another important feature in the Buddhist approach is the deep psychological analysis in order to understand the root causes of a problem while not undervaluing the social and organizations aspects of problems. The problems including social conflicts are born in the human mind. A deep analysis of the human mind is sine qua non for understanding as well as remedying such situations. It is not my intention here to dwell in detail in a Buddhist theory of conflict resolution. It is necessary that Buddhists do more research into this aspect of the teaching of the Buddha and put it into practice "for the happiness of the many".

Conclusion

In Buddhism two virtues, compassion and wisdom, are endorsed as supreme. It is held that the Buddha's behaviour is motivated by these two virtues. Sambuddhatava of the Buddha has its origin in these twin virtues. Describing his quest for the awakening – Sambuddhatava - the Buddha articulates in the following words the compassion he felt toward the suffering humanity:

> Alas! This world has fallen into trouble, in that it is born, ages, and dies, it passes away and is reborn, yet does not understand the escape from this suffering [headed by ageing-and-death]. When now will an escape be discerned from this suffering [headed by ageing-and-death]? [Samyutta-niaka:Nidana samyutta[28]).

The quest for the Awakening was not motivated purely by his own suffering. It was for the sake of the entire suffering humanity. Ever since this remarkable event called sambuddhatva, which the Buddha subsequently described as the dawn of vision, knowledge, wisdom, "science", and light (cakkhum uadapadi, nanam udapadi, panna udapadi, vijja udapadi, aloko uadapadi), he spent the rest of his life (forty-five years according to the tradition) to teach the message of "deathlessness" to all beings. During the lifetime of the Buddha his message was spread in many directions inside India. During the time of Asoka, (third century BCE), the message of the Buddha was propagated to neighbouring regions and countries, and over the next several centuries Buddhism became the religion of Asia. Buddhism did not enter these regions and cultures as a domineering force vanquishing existing traditions. Wherever Buddhism went, it went as a civilizing and peace-promoting movement; it incorporated whatever it could in indigenous cultures, and while it transformed local cultures according to its sublime teachings and attitudes, it was transformed in the process to suit the local conditions and traditions.

The journey of Buddhism for the last twenty-six centuries has been in conformity with what the Buddha said to his first sixty disciples, namely that they should go out and spread the message of the Dhamma for the "welfare of the many, and for the happiness of the many" (bahujanahitaya, abhujanasukhaya). The followers of the Buddha of yore did not violate the peaceful and liberating spirit of the Dhamma in whatever they did - including the propagation of the Dhamma. Today, even with continuous new challenges coming from consumerist worldviews, conflicts and religious rivalries, the followers of the Buddha cannot afford to do anything that is contrary to the Dhamma even for its very survival let alone for its propagation. The ultimate test of the Dhamma is its practice, and it is in the practice that the Dhamma becomes alive. The Dhamma has lived for the past twenty-six centuries demonstrating the relevance and the validity of the Sanbuddhatava experience to humankind whenever or wherever it happens to be. The same will hold true for the future, say, for the next twenty-six hundred years, provided that people keep treading the path shown by the Buddha.

Notes

1 See the Sangarava-sutta (100) of the Middle Length Discourses (Majjhima-nikaya). See Jayatilleke (1963/1980) for a detailed discussion.

2 See the Discourse to Brahmayu (Brahmayu-sutta) of the Middle Length discourses (Majjhima-nikaya) (91).

3 Nagara-sutta in the section of the Nidana-samyutta in the *Samyutta-nikaya.*

4 Cula-sihanada-sutta, *Majjhima-nikaya* 11.

5 *Dhammapada*, 276.

6 Upali-stta, *Majjhima-nikaya* 56.

7 As quoted in Seth (1988).

8 See Brian Victoria(1997) *Zen at War* (Weatherhill: New York) for an interesting discussion on the issue.

9 This does not mean that the Buddhists either killed or tortured their internal heretics.

10 Recently the Sri Lankan Buddhist Sangha has been accused for their support for a military solution to the terrorism perpetrated in Sri Lanka by Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Although a larger majority of the Tamils of the LTTE were Hindu and the Sinhalese targeted by them were predominantly Buddhist the conflict itself did not have religion as its cause. While the conflict was not religiously instigated, one may still say that violence is violence under any circumstance. Although not all Buddhist monks supported a military solution the majority did. The complex problem with protracted violence spanning for three decades and the factors which forced them to adopt such a stance requires a detailed discussion which will not be done here. It is a fact, however, that, due to historical circumstances, the Sinhala Sangha has always relied on the State for the protection of the Sasana. The Sangha seems to have resorted to the same strategy at this context too. The Dhamma would have required the Sangha to follow a different strategy. But the ground realities may have prompted the Sangha to be more pragmatic and realistic than idealistic.

11 Noel Seth SJ discusses similar instances in Buddhist history in 1988. pp. 44-66.

12 This is not to deny the fact that Sri Lankan Buddhism has incorporated certain Mahayana and Vajrayana practices and beliefs at its popular level.

13 The exact nature and degree of the role of the Buddhist monks not only in this particular aspect but also in what is called 'Buddhist modernism' remains to be determined. The commonly accepted belief is that the monks played only a supporting role in the works initiated by Olcott and Dharmapala. Nevertheless, records left by Olcott himself reveals how crucial was the role played by Hikkaduve Sri Sumangala among other monks. Although catechism appears to be the idea of Olcott, it was so crucial for him to get the approval of Hikkaduve Sri Sumangala for his project. Olcott admiringly records how the erudite monk went word by word of the whole document with utmost care (Ananda Guruge 1986 p.cxxxix ff). The fourteen points of the core of the teaching of the Buddha too were given approval by Sumangala. Given the vast Dhamma knowledge he had, it is probable that these points were a joint work by both Olcott and Sumangala. But unfortunately, as our current knowledge stands, we are not in a position to draw a definitive conclusion on this matter. (See Blackburn (2001) and Harris (2006) on the monks' role in ushering modernism prior to the arrival of Olcott.)

14 The fourteen articles which Olcott called 'fundamental Buddhistic beliefs' are as follows:

I Buddhists are taught to show the same tolerance, forbearance, and brotherly love to all men, without distinction; and an unswerving kindness towards the members of the animal kingdom.

II The universe was evolved, not created; and its functions according to law, not according to the caprice of any God.

III The truths upon which Buddhism is founded are natural. They have, we believe, been taught in successive kalpas, or world-periods, by certain illuminated beings called BUDDHAS, the name BUDDHA meaning "Enlightened".

IV The fourth Teacher in the present kalpa was Sākya Muni, or Gautama Buddha, who was born in a Royal family in India about 2,500 years ago. He is an historical personage and his name was Siddhārtha Gautama.

V Sākya Muni taught that ignorance produces desire, unsatisfied desire is the cause of rebirth, and rebirth, the cause of sorrow. To get rid of sorrow, therefore, it is necessary to escape rebirth; to escape rebirth, it is necessary to extinguish desire; and to extinguish desire, it is necessary to destroy ignorance.

VI Ignorance fosters the belief that rebirth is a necessary thing. When ignorance is destroyed the worthlessness of every such rebirth, considered as an end in itself, is perceived, as well as the paramount need of adopting a course of life by which the necessity for such repeated rebirths can be abolished. Ignorance also begets the illusive and illogical idea that there is only one existence for man, and the other illusion that this one life is followed by states of unchangeable pleasure or torment.

VII The dispersion of all this ignorance can be attained by the persevering practice of an all-embracing altruism in conduct, development of intelligence, wisdom in thought, and destruction of desire for the lower personal pleasures.

VIII The desire to live being the cause of rebirth, when that is extinguished, rebirths cease and the perfected individual attains by meditation that highest state of peace called *Nirvāna*.

IX Sākya Muni taught that ignorance can be dispelled and sorrow removed by the knowledge of the four Noble Truths, *viz.*:

1. The miseries of existence;

2. The cause productive of misery, which is the desire ever renewed of satisfying oneself without being able ever to secure that end;

3. The destruction of that desire, or the estranging of oneself from it;

4. The means of obtaining this destruction of desire. The means which he pointed out is called the Noble Eightfold Path, *viz.*: Right Belief; Right Thought; Right Speech; Right Action; Right Means of Livelihood; Right Exertion; Right Remembrance; Right Meditation;

X Right Meditation leads to spiritual enlightenment, or the development of that Buddha-like faculty which is latent in every man;

XI The essence of Buddhism, as summed up by the Tathāgathā (Buddha) himself, as:

To cease from all sin,

To get virtue,

To purify the heart.

XII The universe is subject to a natural causation known as "Karma". The merits and demerits of a being in past existences determine his condition in the present one. Each man, therefore, has prepared the causes of the effects which he now experiences.

XIII The obstacles to the attainment of good karma may be removed by the observance of the following precepts, which are embraced in the moral code of Buddhism, *viz.*: (1) Kill not; (2) Steal not; (3) Indulge in no forbidden sexual pleasure; (4) Lie not; (5) Take no intoxication or stupefying drug or liquor. Five other precepts which need not be here enumerated should be observed by those who would attain, more quickly than the average layman, the release from misery and rebirth.

XIV Buddhism discourages superstitious credulity. Gautama Buddha taught it to be the duty of a parent to have his child educated in science and literature. He also taught that no one should believe what is spoken by any sage, written in any book, or affirmed by tradition, unless it accord with reason.

Drafted as a common platform upon which all Buddhists can agree.

15 Christopher S Queen in Queen and King (1996) p.23.

16 Read his *The Buddhist Flag in South Asia* by Malalasekera (publication date not mentioned, but could be 1952).

17 See for more information: *Women's Buddhism and Buddhism's Women: Tradition, Revision, Renewal.* Ed. Ellison Banks Findly, Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2000. pp.97-101.

18 In fact, after India, it seems to have existed only in Sri Lanka where it disappeared after the collapse of Anuradhapura around 10th and 11th centuries. It does not seem that the Bhikkhuni order was ever introduced to the Southeast Asian region from Sri Lanka.

19 The Ven. Hawanpola Ratanasara (1920-2000), a Sri Lankan Buddhist monk who lived in Los Angeles, ordained and gave full admission to a group of women following exactly a similar methodology. *Women's Buddhism and Buddhism's Women: Tradition, Revision, Renewal.* Ed. Ellison Banks Findly, Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2000, 1999. p.154.

20 In fact the hierarchy of the three chapters of the Sri Lanka Sangha does not recognize this joint upasampada as valid. Consequently the Sri Lanka state too does not accept the existence of bhikkhunis with full admission. The ordinary people, however, do not seem to worry about this theoretical issue.

21 See Seager (1999) for a comprehensive discussion.

22 *Ibid.* p. 232.

23 A representative collection of papers is found in *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology* edited by Allan Hunt Badiner (1990).

24 Peter Timmerman in "It is Dark Outside: Western Buddhism from the Enlightenment to the Global Crisis" in *Buddhism and Ecology*, ed. Martine Batchelor and Kerry Brown, (Indian Edition, 1994).

25 The branches of the Amarapura fraternity were united formally in 1956 under the name, All Lanka Amarapura Sangha Council. In 1974 the organization was brought under a new constitution and was renamed, 'Sri Lanka Amarapura Sangha Council (Sri Lanka Amarapura sangha Sabha).

26 Thailand has only a very few bhikkhunis with higher admission.

27 *Nirvana and Ineffability: A Study of the Buddhist Theory of Reality and Language* (Colombo: Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, 1993).

28 *Samyutta-nikaya* II (London: Pali Text Society) p.104. The translation from Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000) I p.537.

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Appendix I

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF IMPORTANT DATES IN THE GLOBAL SPREAD OF BUDDHISM

There are many problems in preparing a chronological table for a period of 2525 years. The fixing of the actual year of occurrence of an event is the chief among them. For example, although the historicity of the Buddha is now well established, there are several views regarding the year that is ascribed to the Parinibbana (demise) of the Buddha, which is the beginning of the Buddhist era. The year 544 B.C. was taken as the date of Parinibbana and the chronological table was constructed on this basis.

Due to scantiness of information, certain events are placed by historians within broad periods, running into sevral centuries. In such cases the event is included under the first year or century. As far as possible, the dates occurring in standard books were taken in preparing the chronology.[1]

The inclusion or exclusion of a date or event from the chronology was an individual decision and the prime consideration was to keep it within manageable proportions.

Buddhist Era B.E.	Common Era C.E.	Major Buddhist Events	Contemporary Events
-80	- 624	Birth of Prince Shiddhartha	
-45	-589	The Enlightenment	Bimbisara, King of Magadha; Confucius and Lao-Tse in China and Mahavira in India, lived during this century.
1	-544 (-383)	Parinibbana of the Buddha and First Council at Rajagha	Ajatasattu, King of Magadha
100	-444 (-383)	Second Council at Vesali and first schism	Kalasoka King of Magadha
218	-326		Expedition of Alexander the Great to India.
280	-264 to-227	Reign of Emperor Asoka	Punic Wars between Rome and Carthage began (264BCE)
294	-250	Emperor Asoka becomes a Buddhist after Kalinga war	
297	-247	Third Council at Pataliputta, sending of missionaries to Kasmira Gandhara, Mahisamandala, Vanavasa, Aparantaka, Maharattha all regions in India, Yona country (Greece), Himalaya Region, Suvannabhumi (Lower Burma/Siam/Cambodia) and Lanka (Ceylon)	
298	-246		Greco - Bactrian Kingdom founded by Dicdotus
304	-240		Kustana, son of Asoka founded the kingdom of Khotan, Central Asia
330	-214		Great Wall of China begun
333	-211	First Buddhist Monastery in Khotan	

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[1] First prepared by the author in 2523/1979 and updated in 2555/2011

359	-185 to -72		Sunga Period in Central India.
443	-101 to -77	Building of the Great Thupa, Suvannamali in Anuradhapura; Beginning of the tradition of Rock cut temples at Karle (1st century BCE) Nasik, Kanheri, Junnar, Bhaja (2nd century BCE) Ajanta (2nd century BCE-7 century CE) and Ellora (5 century - 8 century CE)	King Dutugemunu in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka Andras in Ujjeni
489	-55		Julius Caeser's first expedition to Britain.
500	-44	King Menander, the Bactrian king meets Ven Nagasena in Sialkot, and becomes a Buddhist: writing of Milinda Pañha: Beginning of Greco-Buddhist Gandhara School of art and architecture which greatly influenced Central Asia	Bactrian Empire.
514	-30		Establishment of Roman Empire by Augustus
515 to	-29 -17	The Ti-pitaka rendered into writing for first time at Aloka-vihara, Matale, Sri Lanka: The Fourth Buddhist Council according to Theravada tradition held in Sri Lanka	Reign of Vattagamini Abhaya in Sri Lanka (29-17 BCE)
540	-4		True date of birth of Jesus of Nazareth
542	-2	Yi-chen, an envoy of the King of Yueh-chis arrived in Chang-an and taught Buddhist scriptures	
544			Beginning of Christian Era now recognized as Common Era (C.E.)
569	25		Eastern Han dynasty in China. (25-221 CE)
611	67	Official introduction of Buddhism to China	
622	78	Fourth Buddhist Council (not recognized by Theravada tradition) at Jalandhar in Kashmir: Ven. Vasumitra and Asvaghosa; writing of Vaibhasa-Sastra	Reign of the Kushan King, Kanishka. Beginning of Saka Era. (other dates 128 CE, 144 CE)
694	150	Ven Nagarjuna, the propounder of the Madhymika philoshophy a contemporary of Yajna Sri Gautamiputra	
710	166		Reign of Satavahana King of India, Yajna Sri Gautamiputra (166-196 CE)
708	164		Great Plague began and lasted until the death of Marcus Aurelius (180CE) This devastated all Asia. Beginning of a Century of war and disorder in the Roman Empire

719	175-225	Ven. Mon-tseu of China who wrote a treatise comparing Buddhism with the teachings of Confucius and Lao Tse	
814	270-350	Ven. Maitreya (Natha) the founder of the Yogacara school	
824	280	Vasubandhu, brother of Asanga (280-360 CE)	
843	299	Goodwill mission from King Vasudeva of Gandhara to China	
847	303		Persecution of Christians by Emperor Diocletian
864	320		Beginning of reign of Chandra Gupta and of the Gupta era (300-606 CE)
		With permission from King Chandragupta a Sinhala monastery established at Buddha Gaya by King Sri Meghavanna (304-333 CE)	
888	344	Birth of Kumarajiva.	
894	350	Asanga, most prominent teacher of Yogacara	
916	372	Buddhism introduced to Kogaryu in North Korea by a Chinese monk	
928	384	Buddhism introduced from Central Asia to Pakche in S. W. Korea by a monk called Ven. Marananda	
930	386	Buddhism declared State religion in China	Northern Wei dynasty in China 386-353 CE.
943	399	Travels of Fa-Hien (Fa-hsien) in India (399-414 CE)	Reign of Chandragupta II of India 375-413 CE
946	402	Buddhism introduced to Silla in SE Korea; Buddhapalita and Bhavaviveke of Madhyamika school (1st half of 5 century CE); Dinnaga, acclaimed to be the founder of Buddhist logic; Buddhadatta	
953	409	Hiu Shen undertakes a mission to Mexico during the reign of King Yung Yuan; Returned 543 CE	
964	420	Ven. Sanghavarman translated books on Vinaya from Sanskrit to Chinese	
975	431	Ven. Gunavarman's mission to Vietnam, Java and China. Java became a Buddhist country under his influence	
979	435	Ven. Gunabhadra, a Sri Lankan arrived in Indrapuri (Hue) from China	
1002	458	Arrival of Ven. Buddhaghosa, the great Pali commentator, in Mahavihara, Anuradhapura; Samantapasadika, the Vinaya commentary was begun in the 20th and finished in the 21st year of the king's reign	Reign of King Mahanama in Sri Lanka 458-480 CE

1032	488	Ven. Sangabodhi from Sri Lanka arrived in Tonking and proceeded to Jetavana Vihara Canton	
1046	502-549	Ven. Bodhidharma, founder of the Chinese, Ch'an sect.	
1070	526	Ven. Bodhidharma left for China from Vietnam	
1092	548	Arrival of Ven. Paramartha (Po-lo-mo-tho) (513-569 CE) of Ujjain in Nanking	
1096	552	Buddhism introduced to Japan from Kudara (Pakche) one of the kingdoms of Korea	
1114	570		Birth of Muhammad
1119	575	Ven. Chandrakirti of the Madhyamika school	
1138	594	Prince Shotoku of Japan, issued an Imperial Ordinance supporting and urging the development of the Three Jewels	
1150	606	Ascendancy of King Harsadeva of Kanauj, a great Buddhist benefactor (606-647 CE)	
1161	617	Ascendancy of King Sron-btsan-sgam-po in Tibet and official introduction of Buddhism into Tibet	
1162	618		Tang dynasty in China 618-906CE
1173	629	Ven Yuan Chwang or Hieun Tsang (602-660CE) starts on his journey to India; Travelled in India from 633-644 and returned to China in 645 CE	
1215	671	I'Tsing's visit to kingdom of Sri Vijaya. On his outward journey to India, Sri Vijaya a Theravada centre; Travelled from 671-695 CE	
1228	684	Talang Tuwo Ins. in Sri Vijaya Kingdom	
1239	695	Re-Visit to Sri Vijaya by I'tsing: Sri Vijaya had become a Mahayana outpost	
1254	710		Nara period (710-784) in Japan Nara made the capital
1258	714	Persecution of Buddhists in China by Yen T'sing; Pala Rule in Bengal - a Buddhist dynasty; Rise of Nalanda University and the Universities of Vickremasila and Odantipuri	
1299	755	Ascendancy of King Khri-Sron-Ide-btsan	
1319	775	Ligor Inscription-patronage of the Sri Vijaya Kingdom to Mahayana Buddhism	
1323	779	Establishment of Samye Monastery, Tibet; Buddhism officially recognized as state religion	
1338	794		Heian period (794-1185 CE) in Japan Kyoto became the capital

1348	804	Beginning of Tendai school in Japan by Ven. Saicho (767-822 CE)	
1350	806	Beginning of Shingon school in Japan by Ven. Kukai (774-835 CE)	
1366	822	Establishment of the second Ordination Platform on Mount Hiei, Japan	
1394	850	Nalanda copperplate of Deva-paladeva - gift of 5 villages to a vihara founded at Nalanda by King of Sri Vijaya	
1411	867	Copperplate Ins.of Rastrakuta King Dantavarman in Kampilya, Gujerat - donation of land to the Kampilya vihara where 500 monks of the sangha of the Sindhu desa lived	
1412	868	Ins. of Pandya King Vikramaditya Varaguna with Buddhist references.	
1428	884	Copper plate Ins. of the Rastrakuta King Dharavarsa recording similar grants to Kampilya vihara	
1462	918	Buddhism proclaimed as state religion of Korea in the Goryeo period (918–1392)	
1482	938	Ven. Kuya teaches the Nembutsu in Japan	
1519	975	Kagudpa school of Yogo established by Tilopa in Tibet	
1522	978	Rinchen Zangpo, the great translator invites Indian teachers into western Tibet and beginning of a Buddhism renaissance	
1526	982	Acarya Dipankara Sri Jnana or Atisa Dpal-mar-med-mdsa-ye-ses or Jo-vor-Je-pal-dan Atisa (982-1054 CE)	
1549	1005	Cola Ins. of Rajaraja I in Nagapattanam recording the commencement of the construction of a Buddhist vihara there by Sailendra King Cudamanivarman	
1554	1010	Buddhism made state religion of Vietnam during Ly-Dynasty (1010-1225 CE)	
1573	1029		Punjab, Kashmir, Gandhara under Muslim rulers of Gazni
1585	1041	Ven. Atisa's mission to Tibet (1041-1054 CE)	
1588	1044		King Anawratha ascend the Burmese throne
1594	1050	Religious council in Tibet associated with Atisa, Marpa and Milarepa	
1601	1057	Conquest of Thaton by King Anawratha and the re-introduction of Theravada Buddhism into Burma	

1634	1090	Construction of the Pagan temple in Burma by King Kyanzittha (1084-1112CE)	
1654	1110	First Karmapa of the Black Hats, Tibet – Dusum Khyenpa (1110- 1193)	
1697	1153		Asendancy of King Parakramabahu I in Sri Lanka (1153-1186 CE)
1709	1165	Unification of Mahavihara, Abhayagiriya and Jetavana vihara monks in Sri Lanka; End of all schisms	
1116	1172	Beginning of Jodo school in Japan by Ven. Honen (1133-1212), real founder of Japanese Amidism	
1725	1181/ 1182	Establishment of the Sihala Order of monks in Burma	
1729	1185		Beginning of Kamakura Period in Japan (1185-1334)
1768	1224	Beginning of Jodo-Shinsu school in Japan by Ven. Shinran (1173-1262 CE)	
1771	1227	Beginning of Soto Zen school in Japan by Ven. Dogen (1200-1253 CE)	
1797	1253	Beginning of Nichiren school in Japan by Ven. Nichiren (1222-1282 CE)	
1801	1257	Establishment of the Lanka-vamsa in Sukhodaya	Ramakamhem became King of Sukhodaya or Sukhothai, Thailand
1811	1267	Beginning of Jishu school in Japan by Ippen	
1814	1270	Creation of the Tibetan theocracy by Emperor Kublai Khan	Emperor Kublai Khan (1215-1294 CE), founder of the Yuan dynasty in China that ruled over present-day Mongolia, Tibet, Eastern Turkestan, North China , much of Western China & adjacent areas
1902	1358-1419	Ven. Tson-kha-pa, the founder of Gelugpa (yellow hats) sect in Tibet.	
1912	1368	Setting in of the decline of Buddhism in China	Ming Dynasty in China 1368-1644 CE
1935	1391	Birth of Gedun Truppa (died 1474), posthumously named as the First Dalai Lama.	
1952	1408	Founding of the Ganden monastery near Lhasa by Tsonkha-pa	
1997	1453		Constantinople taken by Ottomon Turks
2020	1476	Kalyani Inscription	

2037	1493		Papal Bull of Alexander VI dividing the New World between Spain and Portugal.
2040	1496		Vasco-da-Gama discovers sea route to India
2049	1505		Portuguese arrival in Sri Lanka
2093	1549		Xavier brings Catholicism to Japan
2091	1574-1601	Taranatha, a historian of Buddhism	
2147	1603		Beginning of Edo/Tokugawa period in Japan 1603-1867 CE
2256	1712	Buddhism appeared in Baikal region in Siberia	
2258	1714	First Buddhist Temple in Buryati, Mongolia	
2297	1735	Higher ordination brought from Thailand and the beginning of the Syamopali vamsa in Sri Lanka	King Kirtisri Rajasinghe in Sri Lanka (1747-1781 CE)
2378	1834	Tibetan-English Dictionary by Csome de Koros	
2381	1837	George Turnour's critical edition and translation of Mahavamsa	
2399	1855	Latin translation of Dhammapada by Prof. Vincent Fausboll	
2410	1866	First public controversy between Buddhists and Christians at Udanvita, Sri Lanka	
2415	1872	Fifth Council at Mandalay, Burma (Theravada); Second Public controversy at Gampola, Sri Lanka.	
2416	1872	Third public controversy at Panadura, Sri Lanka, which led to a Buddhist re-awakening; Establishment of Vidyodaya Oriental College (Pirivena) Colombo	
2417	1873	Establishment of Vidyalankara Oriental College (Pirivena) Kelaniya	
2423	1879	Light of Asia written by Sri Edwin Arnold	
2424	1880	Coming of Henry Steele Olcott to Sri Lanka	
2425	1881	Founding of the Pali-Text Society by Prof. Rhys Davids	
2429	1885	Buddhist flag designed; Vaisakha Full moon declared a Public Holiday for the first time under British Rule	
2431	1887	Ven. Soryu Kubahi's mission to Honolulu, Hawaii.	
2435	1891	Founding of the Mahabodhi Society by Anagarika Dharmapala	
2436	1892	Founding of the Buddhist Text Society of Calcutta	
2437	1893	World Conference of Religions Chicago; Introduction of Buddhism to USA by Anagarika Dharmapala	
2443	1899	Rev. Sokei Sonada's mission to San Francisco	
2444	1900	First expedition of Sir Aurel Stein to Central Asia	

2451	1907	Founding of the Buddhist Society of Great Britain and Ireland; Establishment of the Jetavana Vihare in Nanking, China	
2452	1908	First Buddhist Mission to U. K.	
2455	1911	Founding of All China Buddhist Association in Nanking	
2458	1914		First World War 1914-1918
2464	1920	Commencement of the Dhammarajika Vihara at Buddha Gaya	
2465	1921	Founding of Societe belge d'etudes Orientales	
2468	1924	Establishment of the Buddhist Society, U. K.	
2469	1924	Buddhist House at Frohnau, West Germany built by Paul Dahlke	
2472	1928	Commencement of Mulagandhakuti Vihara, Isipatana, India	
2474	1930	First Pan-Pacific Buddhist Conference in Honolulu	
2478	1934	Ven. Narada's first Buddhist Mission to Indonesia; Second General Conference of Pan-Pacific Young Buddhist Associations in Kyoto	
2383	1939		Second World War 1939 - 1945
2490	1946	Buddhist mission from Sri Lanka to Nepal	
2492	1948	Buddha Sasana Council in Burma	Gaining of political Independence by India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Burma.
2494	1950	World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) founded in Colombo, Sri Lanka by representatives from 27 nations; The Buddhist flag designed in Sri Lanka in the 1880s adopted as the universal flag of all Buddhist traditions	
2496	1952	Visit of American Upasika Dhammadinna to Melbourne and Sydney and forming of Buddhist Societies of New South Wales and of Victoria	
2496	1952	Founding of the Lanka Dhammaduta Society (later renamed as German Dharmaduta Society) by Asoka Weeraratna	
2498	1954	Sixth Buddhist Council in Burma (Theravada); Ven. Narada's mission to Sweden	
2500	1956	Buddha Jayanti - 2500th anniversary of Parinibbana of Buddha; Founding of Buddhist Society in Brazil.	
2501	1957	First Buddhist Mission to Germany from Sri Lanka sponsored by the German Dharmaduta Society comprising of Bhikkhus Ven. Soma, Kheminda and Vinitha, and Asoka Weeraratna (lay advisor) and the establishment at Frohnau of the Berlin Buddhist Vihara, Europe's First Theravada Buddhist Vihara	
2502	1958	Founding of the Buddhist Publication Society in Kandy, Sri Lanka	
2503	1959	Flight of the Dalai Lama from Tibet to India	

2506	1962		Second Vatican Roman Catholic Ecumenical Council 1962-1965
2507	1963	Persecution of Buddhists in Vietnam	
2507	1963	Shifting of the headquarters of World Fellowship of Buddhists to Bangkok, Thailand from Burma (1958-1963)	
2509	1965	First Theravada Buddhist Centre founded in Washington D.C. USA after visit of Ven. Pannasiha Mahanayaka Thera and Olcott Gunasekera of Sri Lanka	
2510	1966	World Buddhist Sangha Council was founded in Colombo, Sri Lanka with representatives from Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism	
2510	1966	Buddhist research centre established at Halle, GDR; Tibetan Lama Trungvo Rinpoche arrived in U.K.	
2511	1967	Buddhist Mission to Ghana by Ven. Piyadassi. Sri Lanka.	
2511	1967	First Buddhist Vihara established in Brazil.	
2512	1968	Founding of the Mitirigala Forest Hermitage by Asoka Weeraratna - the largest Buddhist Meditation Retreat (500 acres) in Sri Lanka.	
2514	1970	Buddhist Centre founded in Canada.	
2519	1975	Forming of the Buddhist Union of Europe	
2522	1978	Establishment of Toronto Buddhist Vihara, Scarborough, Canada.	
2526	1982	Conference of World Buddhist Leaders and Scholars held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, June 1 - 4.	
2534	1990	Launching of the Asian Buddhist Congress, Colombo, Sri Lanka, March 22-24	
2542	1998		Suicide cadres of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a terrorist group, exploded a massive truck bomb at the entrance to the Temple of the Tooth, Kandy, Sri Lanka, a World heritage site – Jan 25
2542	1998	International Buddhist Conference on the Timeless Message of the Buddha held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, November 9-14; Resolution passed to make Vesak Full-Moon day of the month of May a UN holiday	
2543	1999	Acceptance of Vesak full Moon day as a day of observance of the UN on a resolution presented by Sri Lanka	
2545	2001	Destruction of the world famous Bamiyan Buddha statue by the Taliban Islamic fundamentalists	Taliban Edict to destroy all Non-Islamic religious and cultural monuments in Afghanistan
2547	2003	International conference on "Buddha Sasana in Theravada Buddhist Countries – Issues and the Way Forward" held in Colombo Sri Lanka, January 16-19	
2548	2004		Tsunami 26 December affecting Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand etc

2549	2005	Global Buddhist Conference on "Buddhist Humanitarian Services in a Post-Tsunami Context" held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, March 19-25	
2550	2006	Formation of Red Lotus Organization, the first Buddhist Humanitarian Society similar to Red Cross and Red Crescent, located in Colombo, Sri Lanka, March 22	
2553	2009		Defeat of LTTE, a terrorist group to establish a Tamil Eelam that vandalized Buddhist sites in Sri Lanka for nearly 30 years, May 18
2555	2011	2600th Anniversary of the Buddha's Enlightenment	

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Request for inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the fifty-fourth session

International recognition of the Day of Vesak

Letter dated 28 October 1999 from the representatives of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

We have the honour to request, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly of an additional item, entitled "International recognition of the Day of Vesak".

An explanatory memorandum and a draft resolution, as required by rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, are enclosed (see annexes I and II).

(*Signed*) Anwarul **Chowdhury**
Permanent Representative
of Bangladesh

(*Signed*) Om **Pradhan**
Permanent Representative of Bhutan

(*Signed*) **Ouch** Borith
Permanent Representative of Cambodia

(*Signed*) Kamalesh **Sharma**
Permanent Representative of India

(*Signed*) Khenthong **Nuanthasing**
Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the
Lao People's Democratic Republic to the
United Nations

(*Signed*) Hussain **Shihab**
Permanent Representative of Maldives

(*Signed*) Jargalsaikhany **Enkhsaikhan**
Permanent Representative of Mongolia

(*Signed*) Win **Mra**
Permanent Representative of Myanmar

(*Signed*) Narendra Bikram **Shah**
Permanent Representative of Nepal

(*Signed*) Inam ul **Haque**
Permanent Representative of Pakistan

(*Signed*) Felipe **Mabilangan**
Permanent Representative of the Philippines

(*Signed*) **Lee** See-young
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea

(*Signed*) Inocencio **Arias**
Permanent Representative of Spain

(*Signed*) John **de Saram**
Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka

(*Signed*) Asda **Jayanama**
Permanent Representative of Thailand

(*Signed*) Volodymyr Yu. **Yel'chenko**
Permanent Representative of Ukraine

Annex I

Explanatory memorandum

International recognition of the Day of Vesak

I

"Vesak", the Day of the Full Moon in the month of May, is the most sacred day to millions to Buddhists around the world.

It was on the Day of Vesak two and a half millennia ago, in the year 623 B.C., that the Buddha was born. It was also on the Day of Vesak that the Buddha attained enlightenment, and it was on the Day of Vesak that the Buddha in his eightieth year passed away.

II

The teachings of the Buddha, and his message of compassion and peace and goodwill have moved millions. Millions around the world follow the teachings of the Buddha and on the Day of Vesak commemorate the birth, the attainment of enlightenment and the passing away of the Buddha.

A Message from the former Secretary-General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, to Buddhists on the Day of Vesak in May 1986 reads:

"For Buddhists everywhere it is indeed a felicitous opportunity, while commemorating the birth, enlightenment and passing away of Guatama Buddha, to celebrate his message of compassion and devotion to the service of humanity. This message is today perhaps more relevant than ever before.

"Peace, understanding and a vision of humanity that supersedes national and other international differences are essential if we are to cope with the complexities of the nuclear age.

"This philosophy lies at the heart of the Charter of the United Nations and should be prominent in all our thinking, especially during this International Year of Peace."

III

An International Buddhist Conference held in Sri Lanka in November 1998 expressed the hope that the United Nations would accord the Day of Vesak international recognition.

The International Buddhist Conference also hoped that the Day of Vesak would be accorded the status of a holiday of the United Nations. However, we are informed and appreciate that a number of difficulties of an administrative, budgetary and other nature would arise if the General Assembly were to seek to create an additional annual United Nations holiday.

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We would, in the circumstances, request, as an alternative, that the General Assembly consider the adoption of a resolution that would;

(a) Recognize that the Day of Vesak, the Day of the Full Moon in the month of May each year, is the day most sacred to Buddhists, who commemorate on that day, the birth of Buddha, his attainment of enlightenment and his passing away;

(b) Permit appropriate arrangements, without cost to the United Nations, to be made (in consultation with the relevant Offices of the Secretariat and the Permanent Missions that also wish to be consulted) for international observance of the Day of Vesak at United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations Offices.

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Annex II

Draft resolution

International recognition of the Day of Vesak at United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations Offices

The General Assembly,

Acknowledging the hope expressed by the International Buddhist Conference, held in Sri Lanka in November 1998, that the Day of Vesak, the Day of the Full Moon in the month of May each year, be internationally recognized and, in particular, at United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations Offices,

Recognizing that the Day of the Full Moon in the month of May each year is the day most sacred to Buddhists, who commemorate on that day, the birth of the Buddha, his attainment of enlightenment and his passing away,

Considering that international recognition at United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations Offices would constitute acknowledgement of the contribution that Buddhism, one of the oldest religions in the world, has made, for over two and a half millennia, and continues to make to the spirituality of humanity,

Resolves that, without cost to the United Nations, appropriate arrangements shall be made for international observances of Vesak at United Nations Headquarters and other United Nations Offices, in consultation with the relevant United Nations Offices and with Permanent Missions that also wish to be consulted.

Glossary

Language Key

1. Bangladeshi (Bengali Language) – (Ben)
2. Bhutanese (Dzongkha) – (Bhu)
3. Burmese (Myanmar) –(Bur)
4. Cambodian – (Cam)
5. Chinese - (Chi)
6. Czech – (Czech)
7. Japanese - (Jpn)
8. Korean - (Kor)
9. Maori – (Maori)
10. Mongolian – (Mon)
11. Norwegian – (Nor)
12. Pali – (Pali)
13. Russian – (Rus)
14. Sanskrit (San)
15. Sinhalese (Sin)
16. Spanish – (Spn)
17. Swedish – (Swe)
18. Thai – (Thai)
19. Tibetan - (Tib)

Word	**Meaning**
Achan/Ajahn (Thai)	'teacher'; honourific term for Buddhist monks and nuns in Thai Buddhist tradition
Acarya (San/Nep)	'teacher'; honourific term for Nepalese Buddhist monk
Agama (Pali/San)	Chinese Buddhist canonical texts
Aiki-jujutsu (Jpn)	A Japanese martial art that first became widely known in the early 20th century under the headmastership of Takeda Sokaku
Alambana (San)	The object; the intended object of consciousness
Alaya-vijnana (San)	Storehouse Consciousness
Altan gerel-tu (Mon)	The name of the Mongolian translation of the Suvarnaprabhasottama Raja sutra
Anatta (Pali) Anatma (San)	No soul / no self or not self
Appamada (Pali)	Heedfulness
Arahant (Pali) Arahat (Sin)	one who has reached the state of Arahat, the highest state of inner purity as taught in Theravada Buddhism
Atsaras (Bhu)	Monks dressed as clowns in Bhutan
Avarana (San)(Pali)	Obstruction
Avidya (San)	Ignorance
Avakatha (Bur)	devotional formula used in Burma to pay homage to the Triple Gem
Bangabandhu (Ben)	Friend of Bangladesh
Bardo (Tib)	A state of existence between death and rebirth, varying in length according to a person's conduct in life and manner of, or age at, death
Barua (Ben)	A distinct ethnic minority of 'Buddhist' origin who survived in the coastal areas of "Chittagong" in the modern Bangladesh as Buddhism declined in India between 13th and 19th century
Bat (Cam)	The Begging bowl of Buddhist monks in Cambodia
Bhikkhu (Pali) bhiksu (San)	Male Monastic disciples of the Buddha (Buddhist monk)
Bhikkhuni (Pali) bhiksuni (San)	Female Monastic disciples of the Buddha (Buddhist nuns)
Bija (San/Pali)	Seed
Bodhisatva (San)	one who aspires to become a Buddha; one who practices the Bodhisatva behaviour
Bon-kyaung (Bur)	Community school or temple

Boran (Cam)	The old or ancient way of practicing Buddhism in villages reciting Khmer and Pali verses.
Brahmajala (San / Pali)	Highest Net? The name of a discourse of the Buddha dealing with theories and philosophies regarding the metaphysical matters such as universe, soul etc.
Buddha vacana (Pali/Sin)	Words of the Buddha
Cattaro iddhipada (Pali)	Four bases of accomplishment
Cattaro sammappadhana (Pali)	Four modes of right endeavour
Ch'e-yong (Kor)	Substance and function.
Chado (Jpn)	Japanese Tea Ceremony
Chakmas (Ben)	The Chakmas also known as the Changhma are a community that inhabits the Chittagong Hill tracts of modern Bangladesh
Chao khana yai (Thai)	Regional Supervisor of Buddhist monks in Thailand.
Chedi (Thai)	A term used for Buddhist stupa in Thailand
Cheontae / Ch'ont'ae (Kor)	Korean terms for the Tiantai School of Buddhism.
Chongnim (Kor)	Buddhist Training Centre specialized in sutra study, meditation, vinaya disciplines, and mindfulness of Buddha. (Sangha Colleges?)
Chong-yo (Kor)	Essence of doctrine.
Chortens (Bhu)	Stupa or receptacle for Buddhist offerings
Chukhor (Bhu)	For the spread of the religion
Chung (Bhu?)	Tibetan Beer
Civara (Pali)	The upper robe of a Buddhist monk
Dana (San / Pali)	Generosity or giving (of alms)
Darsana-bhaga (San)	The cognizer aspect
Darshana (San)	Philosophy
Dasa Sil Mata (Sin)	Sri Lankan theravada nun; 'Mother of Ten virtues' (Women of Ten Virtues)
Dhamma (Pali) Dharma (San)	Doctrine of the Buddha
Dhammacakka (Pali)	Wheel of the Dharma
Dhammaduta (Pali)	Messenger of Buddhism
Dhammayietra (Cam)	Annual peace walk in Cambodia
Dharma Raja (San)	Just King
Dharmachakra (San)	Wheel of the Dharma
Dharmatmagraha (San)	Grasping of the substance of the phenomenon
Dhyani (San)	One who is in Meditation
Dhyani mudra (San)	The gesture of meditation
Docheop (Kor)	Identification cards for Buddhist Monks and Nuns in Historical Korea.

Dojo (Jpn)	School for training in Japanese martial arts
Domchoe (Bhu)	A sacred religious ceremony / festival celebrated in Bhutan for over 300 years
Drametse ngacham (Bhu)	Sacred cultural and religious mask dance performed during the Drametse festival in honour of Padmasambhava. It takes place twice a year, during the 5th and 10th month of the Bhutanese calendar.
Druk-Yul (Bhu)	Land of the Thunder Dragon
Dukkha (Pali)	Suffering / unsatisfactoriness
Dvarapala (San)	A door or gate guardian often portrayed as warrior or fearsome asura giant, usually armed with a weapon
Dvevacika Upasaka (Pali)	Two lay followers who took refuge in the Buddha and the Dhamma (for the Sangha was non-existent by that time)
Dvi atmagraha (San)	Two types of grasping
Dzogchen (Tib)	The natural, primordial state or natural condition of the mind, and a body of teachings and meditation practices aimed at realizing that condition. Dzogchen, or "Great Perfection", is a central teaching of the Nyingma school also practiced by adherents of other Tibetan Buddhist sects. According to Dzogchen literature, Dzogchen is the highest and most definitive path to enlightenment
Dzongs	Fortress Monasteries of Bhutan
Eop (Kor)	Specialized Learning Institute.
Eye-Chorten (Bhu)	Chortens or stupa with an eye painted on the square part of the stupa commonly found in Bhutan
Forstande (Nor)	A person appointed by the Board and approved by the County Governor to be responsible for all matters with legal implications
Gangwon (Kor)	Sutra study
Gantha-dhura (San) Grantha-Dhura (Pali)	Vocation of Books
Garuda (San)	A large mythical bird or bird-like creature that appears in Buddhist mytholody
Geshe (Tib)	Tibetan Buddhist academic degree for monks, means virtuous friend (Kalyanamitra in Sanskrit)
Gompa (Tib)	A monastery or a hermitage for Buddhist learning and teaching
Gotra (San)	Refers to people who are descendants in an unbroken male line from a common male ancestor.
Grhastha bhiksu (San/Nep)	Nepalese Buddhist monk who has reverted to civilian life
Grub mtha'i rnam bzhag (Tib)	Doxographical system or works of classical historians, describing the points of view of past philosophers and scientists.
Gyeols (Kor)	Land measurement unit in Ancient Korea
Han (Chinese)	The name Han is used to denote the Chinese People, Language and culture which spread from the Yellow River area in China. Han is used to epitomize the people, language and culture known today as Chinese.
Hanunim (Kor)	A Korean deity from the Shamanistic religion.
Hap (Kor)	Folding or sealing of truth.

Hetuvidya (San)	(Buddhist) logic
Hwadu (Kor)	'short-cut method' in Korean Seon (Zen) meditation
Hwaeom / Hwaom (Kor)	Huayen School of Buddhim.
Hwajaeng (Kor)	Reconciliation of doctrinal controversy.
Hwanho (Kor)	Acceptance or advocacy concession.
Icchantika (San)	Incorrigible
Inka (Jpn)	a term used in Zen Buddhism to denote a high-level of certification, and literally means "the legitimate)seal of clearly furnished proof
Iti pi so bhagava (Pali)	The first words of the Theravada formula used to pay homage to the Buddha
Janchup Chorten (Bhu)	Buddha's own chorten (stupa)
Jataka (San / Pali)	Previous birth stories of Buddha
Jathukam Ramathep (Thai)	an unusually popular amulet sold by some Buddhist Temples in Thailand. The amulet is named for two princes of the Srivijaya kingdom of southern Thailand, and is believed to provide protection and good fortune to the bearer.
Jinlap (Bhu)	To make people understand their religion
Jneyavarana (San)	Obstruction of Knowledge
Jong (Kor)	Orders or Schools of Buddhism.
Kae (Kor)	Unfolding or opening of truth.
Kalachakra (San)	' circle of time' ; a Vajrayana ritual /
Kami (Jap)	guardian deity; ancester or legendary person elevated to a deity
Kanjur (Bhu)	Collection of the words of Buddha
Karma (San) Kamma (Pali)	Morally significant action
Kathen (Cam)	The ceremony held at the end of the 3 months of the rainy retreat of the Buddhist monks where lay people offer new robes
Katikavata (Sin)	'Agreement'; rules of monastic behaviour agreed upon by the Sangha
Kenjutsu (Jpn)	is the common term for all traditional schools of Japanese Swordmanship
Khan, Kagan (Mon)	A title for ruler in Turkic and Mongolian languages
Khatwang (Bhu)	A staff topped by 3 skulls one upon the other
Khyilkhor (Tib / Bhu)	Known as Mandala in Sanskrit, a mystic pattern used for the purposes of initiation and meditation
Kinhin (Jpn)	Walking meditation that is practiced between long periods of the sitting meditation which is known as Zazen
Klesavarana (San)	Obstruction of defilements
Koan (Jap) gongang (Chinese) kongang (Kor)	Fundamental part of the history and lore of Zen Buddhism. It consists of a story, dialogue, question, or statement, the meaning of which cannot be understood by rational thinking but may be accessible through intuition or lateral thinking. Also referred to as gong'an
Krama (Cam)	Traditional Khmer scarf

Kuan Yin (Chi)	Also spelled as Guanyin, denotes the Bodhisattva association with compassion and venerated by East Asian Buddhists, portrayed as a female. Kuan Yin originated as the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara which is accepted as her male form
Kyon (Kor)	Negation.
Langka wong (Thai)	The name of the Sri Lankan ordination lineage in Thailand also known as Lankavamsa
Lhabhup (Bhu)	Representing Buddha's return to earth from heaven
Lhakhangs (Bhu)	House of God, the Central part of Monasteries in Bhutan
Lok (Bhu?)	Different worlds (Heaven or hell or earth or animal world, etc.)
Lonpon (Bhu)	Master of a religious tradition, liturgy, lexicography or logic in Bhutan
Mae chi (Thai)	Buddhist laywomen in Thailand occupying a position somewhere between that of an ordinary lay follower and an ordained monk. Thai Buddhist nun
Ma-ghata (Pali)	Order of non-killing
Mahacaitya (San/Nep)	great stupa (pagoda)
Maha Nikai(Thai)	The great Buddhist sect in Thailand or Mahanikaya in Pali
Mahamuni (Pali)	Great sage
Mahanikay (Cam)	Name of a Buddhist sect in Cambodia, the Great Fraternity
Mahaparinibbana (Pali)	The demise of Buddha
Maha-thera (Pali)	Great elder; a Theravada monk who has completed twenty years after his higher admission
Mahatherasamakhom (Thai)	Council of Elders
Manas (San)	Ego-consciousness
Mandala (San)	A mystic pattern used in Vajrayana tradition for the purposes of initiation and meditation
Manovijnana (San)	Mind consciousness
Mantra (San)	A group of words that is considered capable of creating a transformation
Mai chi (Thai)	Thai nun whose position is between a lay female practitioner and a fully ordained nun (bhiksuni)
Mappo (Jap)	degeneration; the degenerated time when people have lesser inner abilities and inclination
Marmas (Ben)	The Marma also known as Magh or Mog are descendants of Arakanese inhabiting the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of modern Bangladesh since the Arakan kingdom period in the 16th century CE. They are largely followers of Theravada Buddhism and the second largest ethnic minority group in Bangladesh.
Metta-bhavana (Pali)	Meditation of loving kindness
Mitras (San)	Friends
Munmyong Kaewha (Kor)	Attaining civilization and enlightenment ?
Na himi (Sin)	A title used for senior Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka

Namgyal (Bhu)	To make religion respected, well-known and appreciated
Nanavadin (Pali)	One who claims knowledge
Nikai (Thai)	Sect or School of Buddhism, (Pali – Nikaya)
Nirakara-vijnanavada (San)	the doctrine of consciousness without modes
Nisses e sanseis (Jpn)	Second and third generation of Japanese immigrants in South and North America, Australia, etc.
Notorio arraigo (Spn)	Deeply or clearly rooted
Nyamgde (Bhu)	To recall the Enlightenment and Nirvana of the Buddha
Ossuary shrine (English)	The final resting place of human skeletal material
Pakeha (Maori)	A Maori Language word for New Zealanders who are of European descent.
Panca-vidya (San)	Five branches of science in ancient India, namely science of language (śabdavidyā), science of logic (hetuvidyā), science of medicine (cikitsāvidyā), science of fine arts and crafts (śilakarmasthānavidyā), and science of spirituality (adhyātmavidyā)
Paratantra-svabhava (San)	Dependent nature
Parikalpita (San)	Imagined, mentally constructed
Parikalpita-svabhava (San)	Imagined nature / mistaken imagination
Parinibbana (Pali)	Demise of the Buddha
Parinibbanato pancavassasata atikkante (Pali)	500 years after the demise of Buddha
Parinirvana (San)	Demise of Buddha/Arahant
Paritta (Pali)	protective chanting in Theravada tradition
Phowa (Tib)	A meditation practice in Vajrayana Buddhism
Phra (Thai)	Honourific title signifying a higher monastic state given to a Thai Buddhist monk
Phrakuru (Thai)	Honourific title signifying even a higher monastic state than 'phra' given to a Thai Buddhist monk
Pirivena (Sin)	Monastic education college in Sri Lanka
Phurba (Bhu)	A ritual dagger of Bhutan which is known as Kila in Sanskrit
Pop (Kor)	Dharma.
Prajna (San)	Wisdom
Prajnaparamita image (San/ Eng)	Depicted as Boddhisattvadevi, (female Bodhisattva) or a female goddess popular in Cambodian and Javanese art.
Prameya (San)	Cognized/What is to be known
Pratyaksa (San)	Direct perception
Pubba-aparanta (Pali)	East and West
Pudgalatmagraha (San)	Grasping of the substance of the person

Pul (Kor)	Buddha.
Purho (Kor)	Prohibition.
Purnima (San/Ben)	Full moon
Rnam bden pa (Tib)	True aspect
Rnam brdzun pa (Tib)	False aspect
Roshi (Jpn)	Japanese honorific title used for Zen Buddhist teacher
Rupa (Pali/San)	Form
Sahaja (San)	Innate
Sakara-vijnanavada (San)	the doctrine of consciousness with modes
Samadhi (San/Pali)	Concentration of mind on point
Samdech (Cam)	An honorary title of respect used in Cambodia.
Samizdat (Rus)	A word of Russian origin meaning copying and passing of illegal texts
San Jiao (Chi)	The 3 religions or teachings in China – Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism
Sangayana (San/Pali)	'Communal Chanting'; Councils held by Buddhist monks in order to clarify Buddhist religious matters
Sangha (San/Pali)	Buddhist Monastic Community.
Sanghareach (Cam)	The patriarch of the Mahanikay or the Great Fraternity in Cambodia.
Sangha-Thera (Pali)	Leader of the Sangha
Sanron (Jpn)	Sanlun in Chinese, A Buddhist School in Japan.
Sasana (Pali)	'message' of the Buddha; Organization of Buddhism
Sat-pada (San)	Six Feet.
Satipatthana-vipassana (Pali)	Meditation of mindfulness and insight
Satyasiddhi (San)	Name of a Buddhist sect
Sayadaw (Bur)	honourific title given to highly learned/experienced Burmese Buddhist monks
Seon (Kor)	Korean Chan (Zen) Buddhism
Seonwon (Kor)	Meditation study
Sesshin (Jpn)	Touching the heart-mind in an intensive period of meditation in a Zen Monastery
Shakti (San)	Female companion or consort of Buddha Vairochana
Shan men (Chi)	Mountain Gate
Shodo (Jpn)	Calligraphy
Siksa / Siksha (San)	Precepts in Buddhism
Sila (Pali)	Morality
Sima (Pali/Sin)	Boundary; place specified for Buddhist monastic functions

Slovnik naucny (Czech)	An encyclopaedia in Czech language
Soka Gakkai (Jpn)	A lay religious movement within Nichiren Buddhism, a branch of Mahayana Buddhism derived from the teachings of the thirteenth-century Japanese monk, Nichiren Daishonin.
Somdet (Thai)	honourific title given to Thai Buddhist monks of very high standing
Sunim (Kor)	Buddhist monk or nun in Korean Buddhist tradition
Sun lun (Chi)	A school of Buddhism practiced in China, (Sanron in Korean)
Sunyata (San)	Emptiness
Supatippanno bhagavato (Pali)	The first words of the formula used in Theravada tradition to pay homage to the Sangha
Sutrayana (San)	Sutrayana encompasses the teachings of both Theravada and Mahayana and is known as the 'Causal Vehicle', because the path is followed in order to establish the cause for attaining enlightenment.
Svakkhato bhagavata dhammo (Pali)	The first words of the formula used in Theravada tradition to pay homage to the Dhamma
Svasamvitti (San)	Self recognition / Self cognition
Svasamvitti-samvitti (San)	Recognition of self recognition
T'al (Kor)	Deprivation.
T'ong pulgyo (Kor)	The name of Buddhist school which integrated various aspects of Buddhist thought into a type of interdenominational philosophy (Buddhism of total interpenetration) during Sill Period .
Tai chi chuan / Tai ji quan (Chi)	A form of martial arts developed in China.
Tashi Junge (Bhu)	A prayer shrine as a source of blessing
Tashi Tagye (Bhu)	Eight auspicious symbols of Bhutan
Tenjur (Bhu)	Collection of commentaries (in Tibetan Buddhist tradition)
Thammayut nikai (Thai)	The name of a Buddhist sect in Thailand, Dhammayutikanikaya in Pali
Thangka / Tangka (Tib)	A Tibetan Buddhist painting which is painted or embroidered on Silk, depicting Buddhist scenes.
Thathampaying (Bur)	precepter of the king, a highest ranking Burmese Buddhist monk
Thera (Pali)	Elder; Male Buddhist monk who has completed 10 years after his higher admission (upasampada)s
Theri (Pali)	Female counterpart of Thera
Thila shin (Bur)	Burmese female nun whose position is between a lay female practitioner and a fully ordained nun (bhiksuni)
Thmil (Cam)	Devil
Thommayut (Cam)	Dhammayutika Nikaya, the name of a sect in Cambodian Buddhism
Tipitaka (Pali) Tripitaka (San)	'The three baskets'; the Pali Buddhist Canon
To (Kor)	The Way (Chinese Dao)

Tols (Ben)	Schools or institutions where Buddhist studies are carried out in Pali or Sanskrit
Trikaya (San)	Three bodies (of the Buddha)
Trishula (San)	Trident
Tsechu (Bhu)	An annual religious festival generally held in October to celebrate the Drukpa Buddhism in Bhutan
Tulku (Tib)	A particular high-ranking lama (e.g., the Dalai Lama, the Panchen Lama, the Karmapa) who can choose the manner of his (or her) rebirth
Uapaya kausalya (San)	Skill in means
Upadhyaya (San)	Preceptor
Upasaka (Pali/Sin)	Male lay disciple of Buddhism
Upasika (Pali/Sin)	Female lay disciples of Buddhism
Vajra (San)	Thunder bolt
Vanga (Ben)	Ancient sea faring kingdom which comprised of modern West Bengal, India and present day Bangladesh.
Vassa (Pali/Cam)	The three months of the rainy retreat practiced by Buddhist clergy
Vassavasa (Pali/Ben)	the observance of the three months rainy retreat by Buddhist monks
Vaitulya (San)	Heretics
Vetulla (Pali)	Heretics
Vihara (Pali/San)	Buddhist monastery, shrine dedicated to the Buddha
Vijnana-parinama (San)	Evolution of Consciousness
Vinaya	Buddhist rules of discipline
Vipassana (Pali) Vidarshana (San)	Insight (meditatiom)
Vipassana-dhura (Pali)	Vocation of meditation
Vat (Wat) (Thai)	Thai Buddhist monastery
Wang (Kor)	Return.
Wei-shih (Chi)	Consciousness only
Ye dhamma hetuppabhava (Pali)	Pali stanza describing causality said to have uttered by Assaji thera to Sariputta when they first met each other
Yendhum (Bhu)	For peace and tolerance in religious disputations
Yeomburwon (Kor)	Study/practice of Mindfulness of the Buddha
Yuga (Kor)	Yogacara School of Buddhism.
Yurwon (Kor)	Study of Vinaya disciplines
Zazen (Jpn)	Seated meditation in Zen Buddhism

Index

(*The index contains mainly the names of persons, places, organizations and concepts. It was a later idea to include sutra names and the names of classical Buddhist works, and consequently, only some and not all such names appear here.*)

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May all beings be happy and secure; may their minds be contended.

Whatever living beings there may be - feeble or strong, long (or tall), stout, or medium, short, small, or large, seen or unseen, those dwelling far or near, those who are born and those who are yet to be born - may all beings, without exception, be happy-minded.

Let not one deceive another nor despise any person whatever in any place. In anger or ill-will let not one wish any harm to another.

Just as a mother would protect her only child even at the risk of her own life, even so let one cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings.

Let one's thoughts of boundless love pervade the whole world - above, below and across - without any obstruction, without any hatred, without any enmity.

Discourse on Loving Kindness
(Karaniya-metta sutta)

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